Race Critical Action Research: 8th Grade Global Studies Teachers Move Beyond the Status Quo to Address Issues of Race and Racism in Our Classrooms

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Dedication

To my beloved Jen, you know...

Abstract

Research has shown that despite a recent emphasis on issues of race and racism in US society, White teachers struggle to construct adequate learning environments for their students of Color (Epstein, 2009; Martell, 2013; Sleeter, 2017). Further, Milner (2006) posits that when White teachers lose themselves in the "having of good intentions," their failure to act enshrines the status quo in classrooms. Using race-critical action research, the author presents the work of a group of White female teacher partners (n=6) who collaborated over two years to critically examine the role of race and racism in their teaching practice. Data included transcripts of group meetings, reflective journals and interviews. Building on a framework of sociocultural and race-critical theories, the author explores the role that resistance and appropriation played as the teacher partners worked to improve their anti-racist teaching practice. Specifically, the teacher partners sought to defy deficit-thinking paradigms, redefine power in the classroom, and create a caring classroom climate.

Through sociocultural and race-critical analyses, the author finds evidence of what Lensmire (2010) terms an "ambivalent" White racial identity; one that reveals itself to be both race-evasive and race-visible (Jupp and Lensmire, 2016) when enacting anti-racist teacher practice. The author concludes that

collaboration and critical reflection are essential conditions for surfacing these paradoxes and deepening anti-racist teacher practice.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background and Rationale

I began my graduate program of study in 2003. In those first few years, as I began to formulate what would become the foundational principles of my research agenda, namely collaborative classroom practitioner research and critical race analysis, it felt like I had clearly chosen "the path less taken" as there were very few social studies education scholars delving into that work. I am glad I stayed on that path, however, because now it seems as though everyone wants to know more about how issues of race and racism, culture and identity, are experienced by students and teachers. I would like to say a little bit more about that journey and then describe why this particular study is an integral part of this long overdue research conversation.

Although I became a social studies teacher for many reasons, one central reason had to do with a calling I felt to dedicate myself to fighting social injustice. My high school memories are peppered with rallies to "End Apartheid" "Free Mandela," and boycott Coca-Cola products. It felt easy back then to call out the racist and unjust policies of the United States and other governments around the world, but I never had to personally consider my role as a White[1], middle-class, female in a system of White privilege and oppression. In fact, I didn't even know what those words meant.

That realization came quickly, however, when Beverly Daniel Tatum hosted a series of professional development seminars for teachers in the first school where I was employed in a suburb of Chicago. She talked about institutionalized racism and the need for teachers to become more culturally responsive for their students of color. She asked all of the teachers, but especially the White teachers, to examine our racial identities and to think about how those identities influenced our relationship to the curriculum and to our students. These experiences marked for me a turning point, one that opened my eyes to an entirely new epistemology for teaching, one in which I was more aware of the experiences of others and how those experiences were different from mine.

At that time, I felt this new epistemology fighting for its place next to the large collection of other ingrained beliefs about race, racism, and teaching that I had formed over two decades of my life. I would like to say that after Tatum's sessions I was transformed into a "super-being for social justice." I would like to say that, but I can't, because as Lortie and Clement (1975) and Cuban (1984) point out, my repeated experiences with a dominant, Euro-American educational worldview were deeply embedded in my attitudes and predispositions about teaching and learning.

These attitudes and predispositions directly impacted what and how I taught then and they continue to impact how I teach now. Commonly described

as the explicit, implicit and null curricula (Eisner, 1979), I have learned that students' learning in my classroom is significantly influenced not only by what I directly teach, but also what I indirectly teach, and what I don't teach at all. Further, although these curricula have been and continue to be shaped in part by influences beyond my control, the decisions I make as a teacher in response to these influences, has a direct and significant impact on the students in my classroom. In my classroom, I am the "gate-keeper" (Thornton, 1989).

Early in my graduate studies, I began to understand that the ways in which I taught continued to reflect dominant White narratives. At the same time, I began to understand that if I were to serve as a "good" teacher, particularly for my students of color, I needed to change my pedagogy. I had a surface understanding of what a "culturally competent" teacher did to ensure that the content taught and the learning experienced in classrooms best engaged students of color (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, I continued to look upon this philosophy as a list of things to *do* rather than the person I needed to *become* (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 30). Further study in my program would provide greater revelations about the ways in which I would have to negotiate my identities as a White, female, lesbian, middle class Christian identified, urban teacher (Frankenberg, 1993; Landsman, 2001; Mayo, 2007; Roediger, 1999; Thandeka, 2001; Wise, 2011).

Throughout my twenty year career as a middle grades classroom teacher, I have attempted to balance the tensions I feel between what I know is the right thing to do for my students of color and my ability and fortitude to do so. This ebb and flow has been influenced by how society in general, and education fields in particular, grappled with issues of race and racism. Recent race critical scholarship has given me yet another way to better make sense of what it means to call myself an anti-racist teacher. As a White female teacher and gatekeeper, I make the decisions about what I teach or don't teach about issues of race and racism. The ways in which I have and continue to enact both race-evasive and race-visible teacher identities (Jupp & Lensmire, 2016; Jupp, Berry & Lensmire, 2016) have become an important part of my reflective journey. A self-proclaimed research and professional development junkie, I have consistently sought out new ways of thinking about multicultural and antiracist teaching and learning. Although I still cannot claim that my personal and professional journeys have turned me into some sort of expert, I know that my desire not just to learn about but to change the educational inequities I see around me is a foundation that I can continue to develop in myself and in others.

If anything has made these journeys possible, it is the fact that I have not been alone. Professors, teachers and colleagues, students, friends and family have all played a role in this story. After all, learning is a social process. Nowhere has this been more important than in my work with teachers. Throughout my

career I have had several opportunities to become part of various professional learning communities. Whether developing curriculum or reviewing student data, engagement in collaboration with colleagues has consistently proven to me that teachers are more likely to make changes to their pedagogy when they are both supported and pushed by one another to enact those changes. Literature on practitioner research, while varied, has repeatedly shown that teachers feel empowered to make critical changes to their practice when they learn and take action together (Carr & Kemmis, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999a; Martell, 2016; Zeichner, 1993). This belief, that teacher collaboration most effectively results in action, provided one essential impetus for this study.

A related catalyst for this study is the divide that exists on many levels between institutions of higher education/teacher education and p-12 public schools/classrooms. I have noticed particular aspects of this phenomenon throughout my time as a graduate student and practicing teacher. One aspect of this divide could be described as a dissonance of priorities. Simply put, the kinds of issues that are important to urban classroom practitioners have not typically been placed under investigation by university researchers. For example, for too long, the field of social studies education all but ignored critical race analysis as a site for research (Chandler 2009; Ladson-Billings, 2003).

A second aspect lies within research methods themselves. Scholars have pointed out that even when studies purported to address racial educational

inequities, the use of traditional research methodologies and epistemologies may have, in fact, reinforced dominant narratives and racial hierarchies (King & Chandler, 2016; Ladson-Billings, 2000b). Despite the fact that the last decade has seen a significant rise in the number of social studies scholars who have emphasized the role of race and culture in their work (Epstein, 2001, 2009; Howard, 2003b, 2008; Tyson, 2003, 2006), it is not clear that this research has helped practitioners enact significant positive changes for students of Color in their classrooms.

What has become clear is the level of complexity involved in this type of research. In fact, despite a significant turn towards critical race theory in the social studies (Howard & Navarro, 2017), other recent studies have indicated how challenging it is for social studies teachers to address the range of issues that are raised when they do confront racism on personal, professional, and structural levels across social studies disciplines (Chandler, 2015; Martell & Stevens, 2017).

My reading of this theory-practice gap leads me to conclude that an there is an over-reliance of research methodologies that privilege research largely led by university faculty while ignoring the potential knowledge creation of classroom practitioners. While there are justifiable reasons for this reliance on traditional research practices (e.g., constraints on accessibility to classrooms and also on time and financial resources), I believe the field must embrace new paradigms if

we are to move beyond merely talking about and in effect, reporting on these persistent problems.

I do not mean to say that university-led research is not valuable. I believe the opposite is true. Classroom practitioners can suffer from an inability to separate ourselves from the problems we face in the classroom. When this occurs it is vital that teachers seek new perspectives like the ones proffered by education scholars and teacher educators. What I am suggesting is not an "either/or" scenario but rather a "both/and" scenario; our students will do best if teachers continue to develop knowledge of their daily craft as well as of larger race-critical themes and discourses of teaching and learning. In fact, a recent study detailing a university-public school partnership has shown how beneficial this relationship is for all involved (Beaton & Mayo, 2016). As both a seasoned classroom teacher and a university scholar, I am in a unique position to conduct a research study that could serve as a bridge between these two important worlds.

The final motivating factor for this study could be broadly described as a desire to take action in the face of educational inequity. I have often heard the analogy of racism as a moving walkway (Tatum, 1997) or a moving train (Zinn, 2002). In these analogies, when a person chooses to do nothing and ignore issues of racism, the momentum generated by racialized institutions continues to carry that teacher and their inaction in a direction that will allow racism to

continue (often referred to as the status quo). It is only when a teacher turns around and actively walks “against the grain” that they can become part of a resistance movement against racial inequality (Cochran-Smith, 1991).

To unite these three professional desires of mine, this study, then, convenes a group of White, female, veteran, middle level social studies teacher professionals, known collectively as Global Studies Teacher Leaders for Equity and Diversity (GST-LED) and provides us a place to engage in collaborative self-reflection and race-critical action research. The goal of said research is to examine our classroom practices, particularly around issues of race and racism, so that we can dismantle barriers to educational opportunity, particularly for our students of Color.

Research Problem

As with any study, this research project was not just shaped by my own desires, this work was also formed in reaction to the events, situations and conversations that made up my universe at the time. Tragically, this study was bookended on one side by the killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and the acquittal of Officer Jeronimo Yanez in the death of Philando Castile in St. Paul, MN on the other. It is difficult to adequately explain the degree to which those events impacted me, the teacher partners in this study, and our students and their families. In fact, that effort would fill an entire study of its own. However, it is necessary to continue to hold up these events as further evidence that the social

construction of race and the racial history of the United States must be better understood by all inhabitants of this country if we are to move towards a more democratic society where “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness” are in fact opportunities guaranteed to all and not just some.

Until these recent events, claims had been made that the United States had moved into a “post-racial” reality (Heckman, 2011; McWhorter, 2010; Tesler & Sears, 2010; Warmington, 2009). These authors point to the election and re-election of this nation’s first African American president as evidence of a new era where race no longer predetermines a person’s future. Other scholars feel this optimism is misguided; there are too many consistent indicators of social and economic inequality among different racial and ethnic groups. Much of this large body of work describes inequalities in the U.S. school system (Castagno, 2014; Darling-Hammond, 2011; Howard, 2008; Ladson-Billings, 1998, Landsman & Lewis, 2006; Lynn & Dixson, 2013; Sleeter, 2013; Tatum, 2007). Scholars examining issues such as funding disparities, academic achievement gaps and over-representation of students of color in special education and behavior programs have consistently pointed out that marginalized communities in general, and African American students in particular, continue to disproportionately experience the negative consequences of an education system defined by inequality (Kozol, 2012; Wise, 2013).

Recent data point to a persistent demographic trend among teachers and students, noted here as the “demographic divide”(Gay & Howard, 2000). According to the 2013 National Center for Education Statistics, 82% of U.S. public school teachers are White, and 75% are female (Goldring, Gray & Bitterman, 2013). At the same time, in 2011, students of color accounted for 48% of all public school students (NCES, 2014). With related statistics showing that students of color will constitute the majority of public school students by 2042, this demographic divide will continue for the foreseeable future.

While we know this demographic divide exists, we do not know the extent of the impact on teachers and students. There exists a debate about the extent to which White teachers can and should teach students of Color (Milner, 2006). Some evidence suggests that teachers of Color often create classrooms that are more engaging and culturally appropriate for their students (Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, other evidence suggests that White teachers can also create positive learning environments if they critically reflect upon and change their racist practices (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

Clearly the need for more teachers of Color – as role models, as voices at the education policy and curriculum tables – is real and programs to support teacher candidates of Color are essential. However, for the foreseeable future students of Color will most likely be taught by White teachers. Therefore scholars and teacher educators in the field must ensure that the current teacher force

(largely White, female, middle to upper middle class, heterosexual, Christian) has what it takes to serve as high quality teachers for all students, especially students of Color.

How do we do this? While there have been a few primary studies illustrating the experiences of White female teachers and race (Landsman, 2001; Lewis, Ketter & Fabos, 2001; McIntyre, 1997) these studies have included broad analyses rather than offer specific advice on changing classroom practice. Truthfully, we know very little about how White, female social studies teachers interpret the ways in which they appropriate or resist issues of race and racism in their classrooms. Therefore, this study will engage six White, female, middle school social studies teachers in a race-critical action research process to critically reflect on decisions we make about issues of race and racism in our curriculum and in our interactions with students. I use the term *teacher partners* to describe the participants in this study. In addition, as a practicing public school teacher and a graduate student, I locate myself within this research as a *teacher researcher* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). As such, in this proposal I most often use the pronoun *we* rather than *they*. I will discuss the rationale behind these decisions in the methodology section.

Purpose and Research Questions

Unfortunately, there is a large body of research that illustrates how difficult it is for teachers to make this critical turn and embody an antiracist pedagogy.

Abundant studies from teacher education programs have chronicled the difficulties of engaging White preservice and inservice teachers in critical reflection on issues of race and racism (Castagno, 2014; Frankenberg, 1993; Johnson, 2002; Lewis, Ketter & Fabos, 2001; Sleeter, 2017). In addition, there exists a dearth of scholarship illustrating successful action steps taken to address racial injustice in classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Martell, 2013; McIntyre, 1997). It would seem, then, that despite several decades of scholarship seeking to address the causes of this phenomenon, the nation's scholars appear no closer to assisting classroom teachers in the eradication of racism or inequity in the classroom.

If current forms of education research are not bringing the field closer to successfully addressing educational inequities, a shift in the field's research epistemologies and methodologies is required. By employing philosophies that foreground collaborative action research and race critical theories, this research study will unite the three foundational pieces I have outlined here in order to join the antiracist teaching movement and lead against the grain.

To achieve these aims, I convened a group of 8th grade Global Studies teacher partners in the Central City Public Schools[2] (CCPS) in a race-critical action research project. Although action research (AR) is a well-established methodology in education research, I am adding the specific label *race-critical* to denote that two foci of this study, (1) issues of race and racism, and (2) critical

participation and reflection, are underutilized in educational research, but contain components essential to the enactment of meaningful change for teachers and students. Over the course of the school year GST-LED critically examined the ways in which issues of race and racism influenced teaching and learning in our classrooms. Thus the primary research questions for this study were:

1. How do teachers interpret experiences with race and racism as we interact with students in our classrooms?
2. How do teachers interpret experiences with race and racism in our enacted curriculum, both planned and unplanned?

To best address these concerns, this research study brings together the people that are the closest to the phenomenon under investigation and hold the greatest potential to enact change in classrooms: teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1999, 2000). I believe that if given the right set of circumstances (e. g., a collaborative space that emphasizes critical reflection and action), classroom practitioners will create the kinds of substantive change that will reduce racism and inequity in social studies classrooms. The purpose, then, of this research is twofold: (a) to create a space where 8th grade Global Studies teachers in CCPS can engage in meaningful dialogue about how issues of race and racism impact our classrooms, and (b) to design and implement action plans to address issues of race and racism and change our classroom practice.

Definitions of Key Terms

In this section I provide definitions for several concepts that are central to this research.

Action Research. As action research scholarship is connected to various research traditions, it is necessary to clarify how I am using the term. Although action research is grounded generally in the inquiry processes of reflection and action, I frame the action research in this study as collaborative, practitioner based, and race-critical (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014).

Antiracism. Although some have criticized this term for a perceived negative stance, I align myself with Pollock, Deckman, Mira, & Shalaby who clearly articulates that teachers must actively work against the social structures that limit opportunity for students of color on an everyday basis (2010, xviii). Although I use the term antiracist to most often describe my own teaching as well as that of the teacher partners in this study, other scholarship uses terms such as *culturally competent, equity-oriented*, *race-critical,* and *race-visible* to describe similar stances.

Description of Chapters

In the next chapter I outline how two theoretical frameworks, sociocultural theory and race-critical theories serve as foundations for my research epistemologies. I review previous scholarship that highlights the importance of collaboration, critical reflection, and antiracist action when conducting race-critical action research.

Chapter 3 illustrates how I used my research epistemologies to make choices about the methodology for this study. I specifically speak to the potential that race-critical action research and case methodology bring to bear on this analysis. I also provide details about the participants and the recruitment process along with details about the context and setting for the study.

The next two chapters chronicle the findings from the study. Specifically, chapter 4 analyzes the pedagogical moves the teacher partners made as they changed their classroom curricula, pedagogy and climate. Chapter 5 analyzes the complexities of the moves I made as a teacher researcher.

The final chapter presents some conclusions about the findings as well as implications for future classroom practice and also future research.

Chapter 1 End Notes

[1] I am using several principles to guide the racial terms used in this study. First, all common racial categories are problematic in that they deny individuals the possibility to define the complexities of their own identity. These categories are also commonly ensconced in a White privilege paradigm where everything and everyone else is considered, "other." That said, I will emphasize consistency and use whatever terminology is presented within a particular research study. I will also use parallel terms wherever possible. Thus, I will either use terms such as European American and African American or Black, White, and of Color. I recognize the term "of Color" is particularly problematic as it groups together multiple distinct cultures. In the school district described in this study, the term "students of Color" refers to Black, Latinx, Hmong and other immigrant communities. Further, I capitalize the terms Black, White, and of Color to follow recent APA guidelines and also to establish an equitable format for the use of these racial descriptors.

[2] In order to ensure anonymity, the names of all people and places have been assigned pseudonyms.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

As with most research studies, this work represents a weaving together of layers of epistemological and methodological considerations that were developed into this analysis. At every turn, I based my choices on what I believe to be right and true about the changes teachers need to make to our practice in order to become the best teachers for all of our students. As mentioned in the previous chapter, three concepts served as catalysts for this work: (1) teacher collaborative inquiry; (2) the theory-practice gap; and (3) antiracist pedagogy. I chose to ground my research in theories that support these concepts.

This review begins with sociocultural theory writ large, and moves into how sociocultural theory has transformed scholarship in the area of teacher collaborative inquiry and the theory-practice gap. I then turn to a framework of connected theories that I am calling race-critical theories, and review how this paradigm challenges the field of social studies education research to pick up a more urgent stance of antiracist action. Taken together these epistemologies serve as the foundation from which to trace the impact of this study.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory represents an important turn in education research in that it changed the focus from individual to social learning (Palinscar, 1998). This was important for students because it led to the development of cooperative and

collaborative forms of education. This theory is also important for teacher learning in that we now understand that teachers also learn better when they are engaged in cooperative and collaborative learning processes (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond, Ramos-Beban, Altamirano & Hyler, 2016). Much attention has recently been turned to understanding this phenomena on much more specific levels. Of great importance are explorations of teachers engaging in race-critical social learning processes and any resulting changes in their practice. I am using specific concepts from sociocultural theory, namely appropriation and resistance, to investigate the learning processes of my teacher partners and myself as we learned collaboratively together in a race-critical action research project/group.

Sociocultural theory is grounded in the work of psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), who was among the first child development scholars to promote the idea that learning was in fact a social, not an individual, process (p. 30). This theory refuted much of the previous research linking the learning process with individual actions (Palinscar, 1998). Whereas previous theories held that knowledge could simply be transferred or transmitted from teacher to student, Vygotsky, rather, stressed how "…the complex interplay of meditational tools, the individual, and the social world is explored to understand learning and development and the transformation of tools, practices and institutions" (Palinscar, 1998, p. 354). For Vygotsky, all learning took place in socio-cultural spaces and between and

among social others. This was an important turn that led other educational scholars to examine the idea of social meaning making further.

Wertsch (1991, 1997, 1998) has built upon the theories of Vygotsky and others to examine sociocultural interactions in a variety of settings, including educational settings. This work of Wertsch also foregrounds the social nature of learning, described as "how mental action is situated in cultural, historical, and institutional settings" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 15). In other words, like Vygotsky, Wertsch posited that investigations of human nature and the human mind cannot be understood in a vacuum, as had been claimed in early psychological analysis literature; rather, cognitive processes such as learning are best understood as a complex set of interactions between and among agents (e.g., students and teachers) and the cultural tools they employ (e.g., tangible things like curriculum and classroom materials as well as intangible elements like language and emotions) to learn about the world around them. Further, Wertsch (1991) uses the phrase "mediated action" to explain, "the process that exists between action, a person, and the cultural tools they use" (p. 120). In simpler terms, any decision made by a teacher depends upon the person doing the action, the thing they are acting upon, and the social space where the action takes place. In addition, all of these interactions are surrounded and influenced by social, political, and historical forces. In this study I am particularly interested in the influence of race and racism.

While sociocultural theory has been useful for understanding many social learning processes, it has not often been explicitly used to elucidate issues of race and racism in schools. Nasir and Hand (2006) suggest sociocultural research could open up multiple spaces to examine issues of race and learning in schools. Their work supports the premise of this study that as social (and racial) beings, teachers are in a constant process of appropriating and/or resisting cultural tools that are presented to them. What is needed is a deeper understanding about the specific ways in which teachers negotiate these cultural tools (also called ideational artifacts by Nasir & Hand) as they either appropriate or resist them. It is thus necessary to clarify what these two forms of mediated action mean: appropriation and resistance.

Appropriation. Wertsch (1991) states: "When action is given analytic priority, human beings are viewed as coming into contact with, and creating, their surroundings as well as themselves through the actions in which they engage" (p. 8). One of these specific actions is called *appropriation*. Wertsch traces the term appropriation from Bakhtin's (1981) work to mean "the process of making something one's own" (Wertsch, 1991, p. 16). In other words, social actors must take up any given cultural tool and decide the extent to which to use it. In this complex interplay of people and ideas, it serves that different agents would make different decisions about appropriation. In schools, even when a teacher uses the exact same educational material as another teacher (e.g., a textbook), the way in

which each teacher will use that resource depends on his or her own unique sociocultural context. For example, a younger teacher might depend a great deal on a prescribed textbook, whereas a veteran teacher might see it as a peripheral resource.

Wertsch (1998) also stressed that appropriation is not a linear or uncontested process. Rather, "particular instances of appropriation can be characterized in terms of the degree and type of conscious reflection and voluntary use" engaged in by the agent (p. 174). To continue the previous example, when an agent, in the case of this study, a teacher, considers a cultural tool to use, such as a critical text, they engage in a process of deciding the degree to which they will make that cultural tool their own and use it for purposes they negotiate. In the present study the teacher partners and I negotiated a number of cultural tools together. These tools included articles about antiracist teaching practices, reflective journal writing, and our own discussions. As will be discussed, each of the teacher partners made decisions about which of these tools they would integrate into their teaching practice. Often, but not always, the tools we appropriated helped us develop new understandings of antiracist action in our classrooms.

Resistance. Wertsch (1998), drawing again upon the work of Bakhtin (1981), described *resistance* as a form of "'friction' between meditational means and unique use in mediated action" (p. 54). He further explains that in a moment

of resistance, "the agent may use a cultural tool but does so with a feeling of conflict or resistance. When such conflict or resistance grows sufficiently strong, an agent may refuse to use the cultural tool altogether" (p. 56). In education theory, this type of resistance is what Garrett & Segal (2013) describe as a moment of political consciousness, a deliberate act often founded in a belief in social justice and equity in the classroom. Returning to our established classroom example, the fact that the veteran teacher does not use the textbook as a major resource could exemplify a type of resistance. Recent research supports the notion that race-conscious social studies scholars and teachers often reject or resist traditional textbooks because they marginalize or exclude various groups of people such as LGBTQ and people of Color (Brown & Brown, 2010; Chandler & McKnight, 2011). This research also describes resistance on the part of students of Color as a way to talk back to the ways in which they feel their own histories have been marginalized or ignored (Howard, 2001). While both of these definitions are important to illustrate, the present study examines yet another form of resistance in the classroom.

Critical race scholarship further illustrates resistance as a form of refusal on the part of White educators to acknowledge the impact that race and racism have had on US society. Several studies have investigated this type of resistance in both pre-service and in-service White teachers (Crowley & Smith, 2015; Garrett & Segal 2013; Picower, 2009; Trainor, 2002; Winans, 2005). This large

body of work on White resistance has contends that White racial identity is complex and needs deeper analysis.

Sociocultural Theory, Practice-Theory Gaps and Teacher Collaborative Learning

Sociocultural and all other theories are only effective if teachers understand and can apply them to their own practice. In fact, research has shown that being instructed on theory is not enough to ensure that teachers will adopt their use (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). A teacher survey conducted recently by Sleeter (2017) concluded that there is a large gap between what teachers profess about their teaching and their actual dispositions (p. 156). Praxis-theory gaps such as this one have existed for decades and while many scholars have attempted to bridge these gaps, some of these studies have in fact reified a system of transmission: the university is centered as the place where knowledge is transmitted from while the public school sites are situated as the receiver of this knowledge (Brewer, 2014). While many of these efforts have been well intentioned and have elicited important information about teaching and learning, these good intentions are not enough to ensure that all teachers are prepared to teach students of Color. Research epistemologies that balance insider and outsider knowledge, but that are grounded in local settings by local actors are required to best describe the

complex conditions needed to ensure greater educational equity (Cochran-Smith& Lytle, 1999a).

Educational research surrounding achievement and opportunity gaps are well documented (Ladson Billings, 2006; Milner, 2010). However, two other important gaps are under-theorized in this discourse: 1) the gap that exists between higher education and P-12 education, and 2) the gap that exists between what teachers say and what we do. Tragically, the simultaneous nature of these gaps has led to the reality that too many students of Color in classrooms across the United States are still experiencing mis-education (Ladson-Billings, 2006; Woodson, 1933/2000).

Scholarship connecting sociocultural theory to teacher learning and classroom practice holds some promise in eliminating these gaps. While much of the literature exploring sociocultural theory in education has focused on student learning, Palinscar (1998) made an early call for the inclusion of research on teacher learning. In reviewing several studies, Palinscar noted that scholarship supported the idea that learning was a social and not an individual process. She posited that only when professional development methods for in-service teachers reflected the kinds of teaching and learning practices that sociocultural theorists were demanding in the classroom would teachers make those changes (p. 370). If, as sociocultural scholars were hypothesizing, more is learned in cooperative activities, it follows then, that the best way to encourage classroom teachers to

stop the transmission model of education and integrate more kinds of collaborative learning into their classrooms is to have teachers themselves experience those methods effectively in pre-service teacher education courses and inservice professional development. Further, Palinscar (1998) echoed concerns about the theory-praxis gap when she stated, “It is important that inquiry into this perspective shares a dual orientation to theory and practice (Cole, 1996), designed to deepen our understanding of cognitive development as well as to produce change in everyday practice” (p. 371). This scholarship gives credence to the need to have teachers work together to learn not only about education theories but also about how those theories work in action.

Johnson & Golombek (2003) elaborated on the use of sociocultural theory within the field of teacher learning. These authors describe the power within sociocultural theory to ensure that this interpretative research does not merely become descriptions of classroom activities. Their work specifically examined how teachers used the cultural tools available to them (their work focused on peers, expert knowledge, and personal journals) to transform their teaching practices. For these authors learning is a process by which teachers use cultural tools around them (including other people, texts, etc.) to internalize new concepts. Johnson & Golombek (2003) posited that sociocultural theory enables researchers to explore this transformative nature of teacher learning. This process of collaborative meaning-making can then transform the teacher as they

adopt, or appropriate, new processes and practices (p. 735).

Both of these cases are predicated on a shift in thinking about the nature of teacher learning. At the core of this race-critical action research project is a belief that the knowledge produced by classroom teachers is a legitimate form of scholarship (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2009). Action research (AR) practitioners trace this legitimacy through the work of several scholars. Shulman's (1986, 1987) work encouraged the educational research community to re-focus energy from an almost exclusive stance on student knowledge production to that of classroom teachers. He posited that inquiry into the decisions of teachers could yield insight into the workings of a classroom community (1986, p. 8).

In a similar way, Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, 2009) have long worked on the issue of re-conceptualizing the importance of classroom teachers as researchers. These authors emphasize two significant elements of teacher-generated or practitioner-based research: (1) teachers are uniquely positioned as classroom researchers, and (2) the knowledge created by teacher researchers has an equally unique potential to improve both the micro-level classroom community as well as the macro-level field of educational research (Zeichner, 1993).

Teacher-generated research is effective because teachers make good researchers. To illustrate this point, Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) posit that,

"… teacher researchers' analytic frameworks are extraordinarily rich and complex…hence, they ask questions that other researchers may not ask, and they see patterns that others may not be able to see" (p. 465). In other words, teachers' accumulated experience provides us with lenses we can use to better see what is happening in the classroom. Lytle and Cochran-Smith (1992) further explain how the motivations of teachers influence us to produce significant scholarship. The authors argue, "teachers are concerned about the consequences of their actions, and teacher research is often prompted by teachers' desires to know more about the dynamic interplay of classroom events" (p. 466).

Lytle and Cochran-Smith also speak to the promise of this teacher-generated knowledge. The first significant potential result is "generating both *local knowledge* and *public knowledge* about teaching; that is, knowledge developed and used by teachers for themselves and their immediate communities, as well as knowledge useful to the larger school and university communities" (1992, p. 450). This type of endeavor then has the potential to address concerns at both the local level (e. g., individual classrooms), as well as on public levels (e.g., future district and university professional development programs).

The second positive result is not just the creation of teacher-generated public knowledge, but also the likelihood of that knowledge to create substantive

change for classroom teachers and others. In their words, Lytle and Cochran-Smith believe teacher research "has the potential to alter profoundly the cultures of teaching" (1992, p. 470). This comes in large part from a different understanding about the purpose of research. Rather than creating a set of conclusions or findings, teacher research seeks to "(alter) practice and social relationships in order to bring about fundamental change in classrooms, schools, districts, programs, and professional organizations (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, p. 279). In other words, teacher researchers are dedicated to seeking substantive change not only for themselves, but more importantly, also for their students.

Perhaps most importantly, there is recent evidence that when more intentional and significant relationships between teacher education programs and public schools exist, classroom teachers benefit from direct access to theory. In their work in a university-school partnership, Beaton & Mayo Jr. (2016) found that the dissemination of educational theory from the university to the high school led to "a professional culture that works toward equity-minded and student-centered practices" (p. 236). The partnership also provided further promise that teachers hired into the classroom from the connected teacher education program would use "their collective understanding and belief in equity-minded and authentic pedagogies, and their trust in each other" (p. 236) to better support one another in their first years of teaching, including holding fast in the face of bureaucratic challenges that serve to enshrine the status quo.

It is becoming clear that sociocultural theory, under the right conditions, can help scholars address educational inequities. Several of those features, namely a model based on classroom practice and collaboration, have already been discussed. In order to maintain the momentum that several scholars have generated around social justice issues, it is time to insist that education research recalibrate aspects of the field to include more scholarship that treats public schools and their teachers as true partners in the work and recognizes that insider knowledge in and of practice is as valuable as outside contributions. The last section of this chapter will describe the final requirement, an insistence on placing race at the center of research in order to actively resist racial inequality in classrooms. Race-critical theories focus on how issues of race and racism must be at the heart of all education research. It also emphasizes the urgency needed to not just study issues of race and racism but to actually do something about them.

Race Critical Theories, Social Studies Education and Antiracist Action

Given the persistent nature of educational inequity, I argue that the social studies research field needs to expand outside traditional lines of inquiry in order to uncover conceptual frameworks that can simultaneously withstand conservative backlash and challenge the status quo. Social studies research has been rightly criticized for its reluctance to do just this. At the same time, there are social studies scholars who are equally persistent about the need to change how

we do things in our field (Chandler, 2015; Howard, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Milner, 2008). In this section I present race-critical theories such as critical race theory (CRT) and antiracist action as components of a framework that can create substantive change not only for academic scholars but for teachers and students as well.

Race-critical theories. Recent race-critical scholarship has provided a useful framework for interpreting antiracist pedagogical moves. In their literature review of White teacher identity studies, Jupp, Berry, and Lensmire (2016) distinguished first-wave from second-wave scholarship in this area. First-wave White teacher identity studies, they note, articulate race-evasive teacher identities that "describe, substantiate, and document White teachers' evasions, resistances, and denials of the saliency of race, White identities, White privileges, or Whiteness inherent in knowledge and social institutions" (p.1159).

Jupp et al (2016) point out that while this scholarship provided an important focus on race-evasive teacher moves, when reviewed critically as a whole, the studies demarcating this first-wave of research may also have reified or essentialized simplistic and even monolithic conceptions of how and why White teachers deal with race and racism.

It is the second-wave of White teacher identity scholarship that is providing new emphases and pushing the field to examine the nuances not only of race-evasive teacher practice but also importantly, of race-visible teacher moves. The

subtle interplay of these two teacher identities, race-evasive and race-visible, is termed by Jupp et al., as “fertile paradoxes” (2016, p. 1167). Imagined in this way, teachers in the midst of this race work can be understood within:

> An ever more complex sociology of whiteness and White identity in education. This complex sociology situate[s] individual teachers’ White identities and often “good intentions” within the machinations of whiteness at work within larger institutional and societal structurings. (p. 1168)

This new conception helps illustrate the processes of appropriation and resistance (of culturally responsive or antiracist pedagogy) in action.

What teachers are always doing is not cut and dry, not one thing at a time, not appropriating this and then resisting that, but rather both at the same time. They are always taking up something and negotiating its use. Further, there might be many tools in play at any given time. In other words, a teacher may appropriate a new strategy to use while at the same time employing an emotional tool of whiteness that serves to resist new learning about the role of structural racism in a classroom (Picower, 2009). This dance is more ambivalent than straightforward (Lensmire, 2010) and has to do with the grappling of difficult knowledge (Segall & Garrett, 2013).

Critical race theory. As Jupp and Lensmire (2016) note, the development of the field of White teacher identity studies was informed not only by the work of critical Whiteness studies (CWS), but by African American scholarship as well. In

a similar way, in order to keep issues of race and racism at the center of this research, I integrate another theory, critical race theory (CRT), which is based largely on the intellectual work of African American and Latino legal scholars, into this framework. In this first section I briefly review the genesis and central tenets of the theory. I then review significant literature from proponents of CRT. This section concludes by addressing how the proposed study will expand scholarship in this area.

CRT grew out of a legal scholar movement known as Critical Legal Studies. These activists from the 1970s believed new paradigms were needed to combat the more covert forms of racism people of Color were experiencing in the post-Civil Rights era (Crenshaw, 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). They met and constructed a series of critiques to define their future work.

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) first brought CRT to bear on the education world. While acknowledging the interconnected ways in which race, class, and gender work to disadvantage students of Color, these authors insist that, "the cause of their [students of Color] poverty and the condition of their schools and schooling is institutional and structural racism" (p. 55). They go on to explore Harris' (1993) work on whiteness as property. Originally conceived in critical legal discourses, whiteness as property is defined by Harris (1993) as, "the legal legitimation of expectations of power and control that enshrine the status quo as a neutral baseline, while masking the maintenance of white privilege and

domination" (p. 1715). Within an educational framework, whiteness as property is constructed as the set of educational rights and privileges that are assumed by the White population while denied to students of Color. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) convincingly argued that the current educational discourse around multicultural education was in danger of becoming "everything to everyone" which meant becoming "nothing for anyone, allowing the status quo to prevail" (p. 62).

Notably, Ladson-Billings (2003) continued to press for these new research paradigms in an edited a volume entitled, *Critical Race Theory Perspectives on Social Studies: The Profession, Policies and Curriculum,* which explored how CRT was being implemented in the field of social studies education. Although I will return to many of these ideas later, suffice it to say here that these critiques were timely and generated much interest in the theory; the following volumes were soon published: *American Education Research Journal Special Issue: Equity and Accountability 50 Years after Brown* (2004) and *Theory & Research in Social Education Special Issue: Race and the Social Studies* (2004). Both Ladson-Billings and Howard saw in CRT an opportunity to "explain the systematic omissions, distortions and lies that plague the field" (Ladson-Billings, 2003, p. 9), and also to:

> Chart a course for the community of theorists and educators in social education to embark upon a 21st century critique of racism by

> adopting antiracist research epistemologies, methodologies, and pedagogies. Our hope is that this community may one day participate in the dismantling of racism, not simply study it. (Howard, 2004, p. 432)

Over the past two decades CRT has begun to achieve further recognition as a legitimate educational theory with the publication of the inaugural *Handbook of Research on Critical Race Theory in Education* (Lynn & Dixson, 2013) and a review of CRT in education by Howard and Navarro (2017). Proponents of CRT continue to expand their insights by insisting upon research that focuses on the impact of race on education.

In exploring CRT as an educational theory, scholars have emphasized varying tenets and themes of the discourse. For example, Dixson and Rousseau (2006) delineate six themes while Ladson-Billings (2003) emphasizes four. For my purposes I will return primarily to the work of two fundamental CRT scholars, Delgado and Stefancic (2001, 2012), to outline five major components of CRT as well as to show how each component will be applied to the proposed study. The five principles are as follows (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012):

1. The permanence of racism
2. Interest convergence and critique of liberalism
3. The social construction of race
4. Intersectionality and anti-essentialism

5. (Counter) storytelling

The permanence of racism. The first principle is known as the permanence of racism (Bell, 1992; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). For proponents of CRT, racism is understood to be a normal part of U. S. society. Indeed, racism defines the "everyday experience of most people of color in this country" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 7). Related to the permanence of racism is the idea that because it is so ordinary, "racism is difficult to address because it is not acknowledged" (p. 8) by most members of the dominant society.

Education scholars have used this principle to show how reluctant the field of educational research is to engage in these discourses. Ladson-Billings (2003) and Baber (2003) were among a group of social studies scholars who critiqued their professional organization, the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), for eliminating specific language of race and racism in favor of more neutral terms such as "multicultural" and "diversity." Ladson-Billings famously left NCSS and adopted a different professional organization, the National Council for Teachers of English (NCTE), because of this frustration.

Other CRT scholars who study the classroom consistently point to the permanence of racism as an underlying cause of educational inequity in the United States (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Studies both quantitative and qualitative in nature provide further evidence that White

students and most students of Color are experiencing education that is separate and unequal (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

This tenet of CRT was important to the present study because the school district described within, continues to experience large gaps between Back and White students' achievement. Recent data show that on standardized tests in math and reading, the percentage of White students who scored at the proficient level was 76.1% and 77.7%, while for Black students it was 22.7% and 23.2%, respectively (MDE, 2014). Further, national data show that educational disparities in the state where Central City is located are growing, not shrinking (National Center for Education Statistics, 2013).

Moreover, I believe White teachers' reluctance to engage in race talk is further evidence of the permanence of racism. Let me begin with a simple example. One of the most common reasons cited for the absence of race talk in classrooms is the fear of being thought of or called racist (Ellsworth, 1997; Landsman, 2001; Tatum 1997, 2007). Clearly this fear would not exist if not for the permanent and persistent presence of racial inequality in U. S. society. This is not to say that this fear is solely explained by the permanence of racism, rather it points to the persistent ways in which racism influences the actions of teachers.

Interest convergence and the critique of liberalism. The second principle of CRT is known as interest convergence and the critique of liberalism (Bell, 1980; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT scholars have shown that too often civil rights

advancement for people of Color only occurs if it also provides benefit to the dominant (White) culture. Proponents of CRT point out that many civil rights' advancements have in fact most benefitted White women (Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 12). Wise (1998) illustrates this in his review of Affirmative Action. He states, "In 1993, for example, the median income for white women was 16% higher than for black women, and the median white family income was 45% higher than that for black families (Bennett 1995)" (p. 5). Included here would be another important CRT belief, that of a critique of liberalism. Early CRT scholars define liberalism as belief in "color blindness and neutral principles of constitutional law" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, p. 26). These beliefs slow the pace of reform. It follows that well-intentioned White people might still be too content with the current pace of (educational) reform. However, as Milner (2006) states, "good intentions are not enough" (p. 88). It is important for White supporters of educational equity to push themselves to continually act and resist the status quo.

For example, in his study on interest convergence and teacher education, Milner (2008) illustrated how, in their attempts to diversify their teacher education programs, the interests primarily served were those of the university and its White teacher candidates. Although at first White students in these programs embraced the ideas of their diverse peers, terms such as "multicultural" and "social justice" are principally co-opted by White students and staff to in effect

sanitize the once critical and action-oriented phrases. Milner's theory is that because it is not in the best interests of these teacher candidates to talk explicitly about the impact of racism on educational outcomes, they don't do it. Milner (2008) further posits that, "a focus on race just seems irrelevant and inconsequential to [Whites] because they do not live a reality that makes race important or of interest to them" (p. 338).

The principle of interest convergence has largely been underutilized in classroom research. However, I think this tenet could provide great insight into the choices White social studies teachers make both in our conscious curriculum planning and also the subconscious choices we make in everyday moments in the classroom. For example, research has shown that teachers often avoid issues of race and racism if they believe these types of discussions will cause controversy and/or discomfort for them or their students (Bolgatz, 2005; Epstein 2009).

In addition, the critique of liberalism provides an interesting lens to examine Thornton's (1989) concept of *teachers as gatekeepers*. Thornton defines this concept as, "the operational curriculum--the curriculum that is actually provided in the classroom—is, on a daily basis, constructed by the teacher" (p. 2). While this may at first seem obvious, it is of course the classroom teacher who chooses which curriculum materials to use and whether to use teacher-centered or student-centered pedagogy; it is less obvious to uncover

how teachers' attitudes about racial progress might influence their decisions. Inherent in this study is the question: to what extent are White teachers aware that they embrace color-blind epistemologies and how do the teachers interpret the impact of these epistemologies on their curricular choices?

The social construction of race. The third CRT principle is the social construction of race. Proponents of CRT argue that despite the fact that race has been shown to have no scientific basis, society continues to propagate these ideas and keep them alive. This CRT tenet also encompasses the idea of "differential racialization" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 9), which means that the dominant society racializes different groups of people at different times and for different purposes. These stereotypes tend to shift based on the needs of the dominant culture. Many scholars have illustrated specific examples throughout U. S. history of how this racialization process was constructed (Ladson-Billings, 1998; Menchaca, 2002; Omi and Winant, 1993; Yosso, 2005). A few scholars have also examined how teachers construct notions of race (Matthews & Dilworth, 2008; Solomona, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell, 2005); however, many of these studies focus on preservice teachers or teachers of U.S. History.

To my knowledge, no research has examined the context of teachers' social construction of race in middle grades global studies courses. It is important that teachers in these classrooms examine our preconceived notions of ethnocentrism and the ways in which we may unknowingly integrate solely Euro-

centric perspectives of global issues into our classrooms. In this way, I will return to Thornton's concept of teachers as gatekeepers in order to examine how these constructions play out in the pedagogical decision-making of teachers.

Intersectionality and anti-essentialism. The fourth CRT principle is the *duality of intersectionality and anti-essentialism*. CRT scholars point out that despite the ways in which dominant society tries to reduce communities of Color to stereotypes, the truth is that no human being can be so easily reduced, or essentialized. We are complicated persons, each with our own set of intersectionalities, or, "potentially conflicting, overlapping identities, loyalties and allegiances" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10).

The notion of intersectionality is quite important because it allows CRT scholars, while holding race at its center, to push beyond that, "toward the elimination of racism as part of a larger goal of opposing or eliminating other forms of subordination based on gender, class, sexual orientation, language, and national origin" (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 25). Proponents of CRT have fostered other forms of scholarship that have investigated the ways in which race intersects with other social constructs such as gender (Schmeichel, 2011), class (McKnight & Chandler, 2012), sexual orientation (McCready & Kumashiro, 2006), and nationality (Salinas & Castro, 2010).

While the current study will focus on issues of race and racism, intersections with other "isms" would not, indeed could not, be ignored. In

addition, in our explorations of global issues curricula, it was essential that teachers interrogate the ways in which we may reify and/or essentialize certain racial or cultural groups.

(Counter) storytelling. The fifth and final principle of CRT is *(Counter) storytelling*. This concept highlights both the belief that people of Color have experiences that provide them with unique qualifications to speak out, or storytell, about issues of race and racism while also challenging the "master narratives" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 10) of dominant society. Underrepresented communities of Color can provide these different perspectives, also called counternarratives, to the majoritarian perspective (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). Counternarratives can and should be used to illustrate both the limitations of meritocracy and also the restrictions experienced by marginalized members of U.S. society.

Although the literature on counterstorytelling from current social studies practitioners is scant, there is one notable exception. Martell (2013) uses critical race theory and culturally relevant teaching to explore how his students experienced learning history in his 11th grade U.S. History classroom. Among his findings was confirmation that his use of counternarratives was one way he could empower his students of Color. Martell encouraged teachers "to challenge 'White history' as the only narrative by presenting race and ethnicity overtly, as well as the many historical narratives that exist within our pluralistic society" (p. 81).

One of the significant conclusions from previous literature illustrates the tendency of White teachers to avoid issues of race and racism altogether; on the rare occasions when race talk does enter their classrooms, White teachers often ignore the voices of their students of Color (Epstein, 2009; Howard, 2004). Of particular note to this study, then, is teachers' interpretation of the presence of counterstorytelling in their classrooms.

I am using CRT for several reasons. The first is that I agree with other scholars who have critiqued the field for undertheorizing race and racism as central components of educational research (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). In addition, given the profound ways in which issues of race and racism continue to permeate U.S. society (e.g., Police violence, Trayvon Martin, Professor Gates) it is essential to employ research epistemologies that "place race at the center of social analysis" (Howard, 2004, p. 487). As an urban teacher researcher, I engage in discussions about issues of race and racism on a daily basis. Using CRT ensures that I consistently ask myself a different type of question. Rather than asking "Did race play a role in this?" I ask, "What role did racism play and how can I change this unequal system?" (Howard, 2003a, p. 30).

While this literature is helpful in elucidating a framework for understanding how structural racism perpetuates educational inequity in this country, its use also demands that teachers commit to action. Whether referred to as promoting social justice concerns or leading an antiracist movement, proponents of CRT

take up Ladson-Billings call to adopt a more proactive sociopolitical stance in the classroom (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Milner, 2014). In this study we adopted the term *ant-racist* to describe our actions.

Antiracist action. If there is one thing that race critical scholars agree on, it is that the field has not succeeded in enacting sufficient change to mitigate the negative effects of racism in schools. I drew heavily from the work of two education scholars, Milner (2006) and Pollock (2008) to develop conceptions of antiracist action. Milner's work on addressing issues of race and racism in classrooms and teacher education programs is well known (2006, 2010). His recent work has significantly addressed the gaps between the worlds of P-12 public education and higher education by explicitly linking social justice oriented theory to classroom practice. I used several of his concepts to construct the foundations of this study. For example, in his work on good intentions, Milner (2006) makes it clear that teachers who teach students of Color must take on certain dispositions and make specific pedagogical moves if they are to "do better" for their students of Color. Specifically teachers must address deficit thinking in their interactions with students. They also must understand how the nature of privilege places them in a position of power in the classroom. Finally, teachers must adopt a stance of both critical reflection and critical action to ensure that necessary changes are made to their practice.

Pollock (2008) and Pollock, Deckman, Mira and Shalaby (2010) also outline key tensions that teacher educators must hold and address as they conduct critical race work with preservice and inservice teachers. The first tension refers to the theory-praxis gap mentioned previously. These authors reported that the pre-service teachers in their study often felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of the issue of race and needed help to uncover their beliefs about racism on personal, professional, and structural levels. The second tension illustrated the need to engage teachers with the structural and systemic nature of racism while simultaneously assuring them that they can engage in meaningful resistance of these complex institutional problems. The third tension describes the importance of attending to both the personal and professional development of teachers as they engage in race work. Commonly referred to as the "will versus skill" debate, Pollock et al., (2010) argue teachers must be provided with opportunities to critique their own worldviews while simultaneously being expected to apply what they are learning in concrete ways.

Since the inception of CRT into the field of social studies education 20 years ago, several important scholars have placed race at the center of analysis (Epstein, 2009; Howard, 2003a; Ladson-Billings, 1998, 2003; Tyson, 2006). Additionally, there is a new group of scholars pushing conceptions of anti-racist teaching practices within the field of social studies education (Chandler, 2009; King & Chandler, 2016; Martell, 2015; Martell & Stevens, 2017). These scholars

are creating new forms of discourse about the teacher practice implicated in making antiracist and social justice oriented moves in the classroom. For example, King and Chandler (2016) illustrate their conception of *non-racist* vs. *anti-racist* stances in the classroom:

> We define non-racist curriculum and pedagogy as a racially liberal approach to race that favors passive behaviors, discourses, and ideologies and that rejects extreme forms of racism. These aspects reduce the definition of racism to a microanalysis of the individual and to immoral and prejudiced behaviors. An anti-racist stance, on the other hand, is an active rejection of the *institutional* and *structural* aspects of race and racism and explains how racism is manifested in various spaces, making the social construct of race visible (p. 4).

These authors make a strong case that the field of social studies teacher education has long adopted a non-racist, rather than an anti-racist, stance and thereby has not provided pre-service teachers with the tools they require to "teach about race in meaningful, authentic ways" (p. 8).

Martell and Stevens (2017) have extended the ideas of King and Chandler (2016) into the world of inservice teaching. These authors developed a similar paradox known as *tolerance-oriented* vs. *equity-oriented* approaches to race in the social studies classroom (p. 1). Within a tolerance-oriented approach, teachers emphasize racism as individual prejudice, whereas equity-oriented

teachers focus on the structural levels of racial equity. Their study of ten self-identified race-conscious teachers showed that while all of their participants made race a focal point for their courses, tolerance-oriented teachers provided limited ways for their students to engage with the systemic nature of racism, thereby allowing students to believe racist acts were more individuated in nature. At the same time, teachers with a more equity-oriented stance encouraged their students to interrogate race and racism as socially created structures that could be dismantled.

Analyses such as these continue to show that deeper study into antiracist teaching practice is needed in order to "move race to the center of their classrooms" (Martell & Stevens, 2017, p. 22) so that teachers and students can interrogate systems of racial (and other) inequity and dismantle them.

Conclusion

What is becoming clear is that despite recent research indicating more scholars and classroom practitioners are engaged in critical self-reflection about issues of race and racism, the impact on teacher practice, not to mention student learning is still not clear. The current study will extend conceptions of sociocultural and race-critical theories in order to open some new spaces in thinking about the nature of teacher's decision-making processes. The next chapter will outline the methods used to create those spaces.

Chapter 3: Methodology Introduction and Overview

As a reflective researcher, the process of locating research methods that were congruous with my pedagogical and epistemological beliefs was critical. I believe strongly in producing work that encourages collaborative and emancipatory inquiry for teachers. Therefore, what was important to me was to locate and utilize research methods that would produce the following parameters: 1) a collaborative space that encouraged critical refection; 2) a collaborative space that encouraged antiracist action; 3) a reflexive space, where exploring the boundaries between graduate student investigator and classroom teacher participant would assist me in promoting a healthy flow of ideas between the university and the public school classroom.

This dissertation study uses components from two qualitative research methodologies that met my criteria: action research and case study. I will begin with a description of action research to outline some larger themes of the study, such as reflexivity and positionality of the researcher. I will then detail the finer points of case methodology, including data collection and analysis. This section will conclude with descriptions of the research context and participants.

Review of Action Research

There exists a robust body of literature on the use of action research (AR) in education (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999b; McTaggart, 1991; Noffke, 1997; Zeichner, 1993). Defined generally as *research leading to*

social action (Lewin, 1946), various branches of the action research family tree (Noffke, 1997) emphasize different components of the paradigm. For example, Carr and Kemmis (1986) categorize action research into three divisions: technical, practical and emancipatory, based on the intended purposes of the research. Other researchers have adapted the term action research to identify a particular epistemological emphasis. Classroom action research for example emphasizes an intended audience, whereas collaborative inquiry emphasizes the research process itself. Further, a relatively recent re-conception of the action research paradigm, critical participatory action research (Kemmis, McTaggart & Nixon, 2014) seeks to re-center research on larger societal discourses of oppression and social justice.

Deciding just what kind of action research project this study represented proved to be a complicated task. Originally attracted to the ideas of critical participatory action research (Kemmis, McTaggart, & Nixon, 2014), and community based teaching and learning (Brewer, 2014), the specific focus and context of this study precluded such a move. While the teacher partners and I endeavored to deliberate upon and enact emancipatory changes, we also often discussed everyday, practical concerns. Similarly, although we recognized that emancipatory change necessitates collaboration with stakeholders outside of our classrooms, our focus was primarily on our own classroom practices and did not extend out into the community.

However, this study did align its aims with that of critical and participatory action research in that the GST-LED group shared "a commitment to bring together broad social analyses: the self-reflective collective self-study of practice, the way language is used, organization and power in a local situation, and action to improve things" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 568). In other words, through critical self-reflection, we balanced our own individual understandings of the teaching and learning that transpired in our classrooms, alongside our understandings of how the larger framework of social constructs (i.e., race, identity, politics, etc.) influenced those understandings and interpretations.

In addition, I am using the term *race-critical* action research for specific reasons. Whereas the field of education research has been criticized for enabling the status quo, this study attempts to refute that. By addressing questions about the ways in which issues of race and racism influence our classrooms, the teacher partners and I committed to problematizing our own racial identities and histories so that we could better understand the moves we make as teachers as well as how to make those moves more socially just.

A further consideration concerned the nature of collaboration. Teacher collaboration is also defined in a variety of ways in the research. While I worked within a broad definition of collaboration, I struggled with how to make the group sessions more collaborative. Whereas many forms of collaboration occurred, particularly during our group sessions, it was unrealistic, given the limited amount

of time the teacher partners could commit to this project, while simultaneously attending to all of the other concerns in their classrooms and their personal lives, to expect them to contribute time and energy on an “equal” footing with myself. I quickly learned that my role as facilitator would often become my primary role. For example, one of the first issues the GST-LED group negotiated was to agree that I would be the one to locate the critical texts to engage in along with the ways to engage with those texts. In return, the teacher partners to agree to provide meaningful feedback about those choices. Further, we agreed that each participant had an equal opportunity to ask for group parameters to be adjusted if such needs arose within the group.

Therefore, while I appreciate that each of these action research “families” have made unique contributions to the field of education research as well as to the present study, I support Zeichner’s (1993) evaluation of AR in its broadest sense “as a systematic inquiry by practitioners about their own practice” (p. 200). Whatever our aims and processes, we engaged in action research. That being said, whenever possible and/or necessary I will discriminate between specific elements of the research and its relevant literature so as to be as clear as possible about the moves I made in this study.

Some scholars also delineate between action research, practitioner research and teacher collaborative inquiry. In this study these terms hold more similarities than distinct differences as they all share a focus on knowledge

created by classroom teachers and they also emphasize collective and collaborative forms of reflection. As noted earlier, a commitment to collaboration does not ensure or even necessitate egalitarian practice. Action research presents interesting challenges in terms of the relationships of the participants. I became very aware of my dual positioning within the group, which I will describe next.

Positionality and the role of the researcher in action research. The role of the researcher in an action research project is critical. One component of a researcher's identity is how they position themselves within the research study. Oftentimes this positionality is described in terms of a dichotomy: The researcher has *insider* or *outsider* status. An insider would be someone who shares characteristics in common with the participants, while an outsider would be seen as someone who does not. In their work, Adler and Adler (1994) reviewed previous scholarship about researchers' participation stances. They described how insider status would provide a researcher greater access to participants' interpretations because of a perceived shared experience, while researchers positioned outside of the participant group could provide a more critical and open view of experiences due to a perceived distance from the subjects.

At the same time, other research illustrates the complexities of insider/outsider status for researchers. In their study, Merriam et al. (2001) described situations where presumed insider status did not create greater access

and likewise, researchers who thought they would be perceived as cultural outsiders found deep connections with the participants. In this study, my position as insider and outsider shifted as my job description changed. Originally, I balanced the duality of my status as a part-time university researcher (outsider) with that of a full-time classroom teacher (insider). However after the first year of the study, I accepted a “teacher on special assignment” role within my building. In this role I initially continued to teach but those duties ended after the first semester. Throughout all of these transitions, I tried to be as transparent as I could about how these changes impacted my conceptions of my role within the group.

Further, whereas a common stance for a social researcher is that of a participant observer, one whose central task is to observe and record interpretations and participate in conversations on a limited basis, I initially positioned myself in this study as a teacher researcher participant, one who originated the study and also participated fully in the workings of the group. While I also attempted to balance these roles and responsibilities, in the last few months of the study, I was aware that I no longer shared the same sorts of restrictions on my time that the other teacher partners did.

Given these complexities, this dual positionality enhanced this study in several important ways. As an 8th grade Global Studies teacher working within the CCPS school district context, I shared many of the everyday experiences of

the other teacher partners. It was common for our GST-LED meetings to start out with anecdotes about our day that we could all relate to. Further, as a middle class, White, female teacher we also shared many common cultural experiences. Although not all of the teacher partners had children, we all did live near extended family members and we often talked about the promise and peril of family obligations. These shared realities allowed me to create a collegial atmosphere and provided greater access to our stories.

At the same time, my status as a university researcher at times placed me as an outsider. My experiences and training through my graduate studies allowed me to bring a critical eye to the "commonsense" ways of teaching in this school district (Kumashiro, 2009), which further allowed me to present those critiques to the group for their consideration. This outsider status, however, also influenced the actions and reactions of the other group members. For example, at times the teacher partners perceived that I was directing our discussions too much and so we re-calibrated our roles and responsibilities.

Throughout the research, I turned to the literature to assist me in dealing with these complexities. Research has shown that White teachers often resist engaging with issues of race and racism in classrooms (Epstein, 2009; McIntyre, 1997; Sleeter, 1993). Given this preponderance of evidence, I decided that taking on a more active role better ensured that our conversations did not remain innocuous or "color-mute" as Pollock (2004) warns. Rather, the guidance I

provided pushed us to deeper interpretations of our work and most importantly, towards taking anti-racist actions to create substantive and positive change for our students.

Reflexivity and the role of the researcher in action research. While I accept that, as the originator and facilitator of this study, I made most if not all of the decisions for the group, previous scholarship convincingly documents the importance of creating and maintaining a learning community based on egalitarian and emancipatory principles (Westheimer, 1998). Therefore I attempted to be conscious of the ways in which power was negotiated between myself as researcher and the other teacher partners. Race-critical action research requires an awareness of these power differentials. In order to accomplish this, reflexivity was as important a concept for me as it was for my fellow teacher partners.

Described as a "conscious experiencing of the self" (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 183), reflexivity requires that researchers think about who they are and how they both change and are changed by the research process. Several other scholars have provided useful descriptions of this reflexive practice. Berger's work (2013) describing the multiple ways she found herself positioned in her studies, illustrates the challenges inherent in a study in which the researcher has recent and direct contact with the local knowledge involved in the study. These

challenges include access to information, relationship with the participants, and determination of conclusions.

These challenges cannot be avoided; rather, they must be recognized and attended to. Reflexive scholars share sage advice in this area. For McIntyre (2008) reflexivity provides a process to build relationship between researchers and participants. As reflexive researchers "attend to how [one's] personal biography informs [one's] ability to listen, question, synthesize, analyze, and interpret knowledge" (p. 8), the authenticity of the researcher provides a foundation from which participants can grow their own levels of self-reflection.

Further, in her work as a teacher researcher, Wirth (Ravitch & Wirth, 2007) emphasizes adopting a systematic practice for reflecting on identity within the inquiry process:

> In the context of insider action research, reflexivity is a central concept and vital concern. The practitioner must not only reflect on his or her identity/ies, roles, and relationships with participants, but must develop methods for systematically doing so into the research design in order to work towards validity and authentic inquiry. This is a recursive and dynamic process. The insider action researcher must learn about the intersections of the personal and political, the collective and the individual, the ideological and the practical. (p. 86)

In this sense, reflexivity protects the credibility of the study in that the researcher accepts the responsibility to ensure that reflection on both micro and macro levels takes place.

Previous scholarship also provides specific tools and processes that can be used to strengthen the reflexive process. Milner (2003, 2007) encourages the participant researcher to engage in a systematic process of self-reflection, especially when the teacher researcher engages in research that investigates issues of culture and race. Milner's process emphasizes what he calls "race reflective journaling" (Milner, 2003, p. 177). This process "requires teachers to reflect on the racial influences of their work" so that "teachers might uncover aspects of who they are as racial beings" (p. 177). Milner (2007) posits that as the journaling process is completed, the teacher researcher will be in a better position to become conscious of "known (seen), unknown (unseen), and unanticipated (unforeseen) issues, perspectives, epistemologies, and positions" (p. 395). In this study I used journaling extensively, as did the teacher partners. This will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

To further ensure this systematic approach to my own reflexivity, I adopted a process of memo writing. Although scholars use memos for different reasons and purposes (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014), I used memo writing for the following purposes: 1) to record my initial thoughts and plans for each group session, 2) to record how actual events in the study differ from planned events, 3)

to record my reactions to the interpretations created by the group, 4) to record questions for further investigation. This process enabled me to constantly question the moves I made in this study.

Action research participants as teacher partners. A second important methodological consideration of AR has to do with the role of participants in the study. It has become commonplace in action research to view participants more as co-researchers who play an active role in shaping the study rather than as inactive participants who agree to have the research study happen to them (McIntyre, 2008; McTaggart, 1991). I am encouraged by scholarship that claims the key to enacting change in the classroom is the engagement of the classroom teacher. As McTaggart (1991) stated, "authentic participation in research means sharing in the way research is conceptualized, practiced and brought to bear on the life-world. It means ownership – responsible agency in the production of knowledge and the improvement of practice" (p. 171). It was important that the participants in this study experience both an invitation into this work as well as a plea to understand the weight of the work.

The term co-researcher, however, is problematic in the sense that I am the sole author of this work and as such I am the only one truly responsible for the work. In addition, I am the one who will have a new status conferred upon me at the conclusion of the study. In this study, then, the teacher partners did not experience an equal share of the decision-making. At the same time, calling

teachers “participants” and reducing their participation to mere involvement (e.g., one to be observed or interviewed) is at best inauthentic and at worst continues to undermine the value of classroom teacher experience and elevate the role of university researchers. Rather than propagate a research stance that continues to give prominence to the experiences and voices solely of academia, the present study foregrounds the interpretations of classroom practitioners in order to enact substantive change in classrooms. I decided instead to use the term *teacher partner.* In this way, I was able to approach the other teachers with a sense of common purpose while acknowledging that our contributions to the work would not be the same.

The participatory component of AR. While not framed as a “participatory action research” project per se, this study employed two definitions of the word *participatory* because participation is essential to collaboration. First, each teacher partner was expected to participate fully in the action research process, that is, to engage in the difficult work of critical self-reflection. I closely followed the work of McIntyre (2008) who describes this process of self-reflection as a form of reflexivity. Reflexivity, she says, “occurs within the context of the social relationships that exist between researcher practitioners and participants” (p. 8). This kind of participatory stance, which I will continue to refer to as reflexivity, is an essential component of transformation.

Transformation must happen if teachers are to create substantive changes in their classroom practice. In her discussion of Shujaa's (1997) work on worldviews, Ladson-Billings (2000a) connects the importance of actively acquiring new knowledge to the process of changing a worldview based on dominant Euro-American epistemologies:

> The process of developing a worldview that differs from the dominant worldview requires active intellectual work on the part of the knower, because schools, society, and the structure and production of knowledge are designed to create individuals who internalize the dominant world view and knowledge production and acquisition processes. (p. 258)

To return to the idea of racism as a moving walkway, school curriculum and culture historically have been created using dominant Euro-American knowledge systems. In order to actively resist the replication of these systems, teachers must be willing to transform their worldviews through critical reflection.

At the same time, the word participatory is constructed here as a social stance, as a belief in the importance of collaboration with others. There is a well-established body of work representing various viewpoints about the importance of teacher collaboration. This research suggests that a powerful kind of learning takes place when teachers learn together. For example, studies into such teacher collaborations as "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998), "critical friends groups" (Bambino, 2002) and "community of teacher learners" (Thomas et al.,

1998) extends an increasing body of work that re-centers teacher collaborative learning as a critical component to improved practice. While I noted earlier that the roles and responsibilities within the GST-LED group would not be equal, we agreed that changing our practice would only be accomplished by working on these complexities together.

Review of Case Study Methodology

Qualitative researchers such as Merriam (1998), Miles and Huberman (1994) and Stake (1995) agree that the key to a case study is defining the case itself. Known as a "bounded system" (Merriam, 2001, p. 27), a case is defined as a particular phenomenon that contains defined limits. In other words, the researcher makes clear who or what is included within the case and who or what is not. In this study, the foci of the investigation were the interpretations of a particular group of teachers (White, female, veteran) within a particular set of social concerns (understanding the ways in which they address issues of race and racism in their classrooms) and within a particular set of circumstances (all of these teachers teach within the CCPS as 8th grade global studies teachers). Only this particular group of individuals fit this definition and therefore constituted the case for this study.

Case methodology was chosen for this study for several reasons. What I am after is a rich description of a particular phenomenon. As Merriam et al., (2001) note, "by concentrating on a single phenomenon or entity (the case), the

researcher aims to uncover the interaction of significant factors characteristic of the phenomenon. The case study focuses on holistic description and explanation" (p. 29). The result of this dissertation is a descriptive case study, one that contains a detailed description of the interpretations of this group of teachers as we engaged each other in an investigation of our own classroom practices.

Another interesting component of case methodology is the use of theory. In case study literature, theory is most often described in terms of explanatory cases. In explanatory cases, theory would be used to explain the causes or effects of a particular phenomenon. However, theory also contributes to a successful descriptive case. Descriptive cases tend to provide as complete a portrait of the case as possible. This would include an analysis of possible motives of participants, but it would not seek to prove the effectiveness of any one particular theory. In this descriptive study, I use theory to inform what my description should include or not include (Yin, 2003, p. 23). This will also help structure the boundaries of the case itself. For example, I use sociocultural theory to ensure that I focus on how the teachers engage in mediated action, and I use critical race theory to examine the roles of race, racism, and identity in the classroom.

Data sources and collection. In preparing to collect and analyze the considerable amounts of data produced in descriptive case research, I am

reminded of this admonition from Hays (2004), “the research questions must be kept foremost in the researcher’s mind. They are the threads to be followed” (p. 232). In this process I was careful to organize the data in such a way that “[answered] the research questions in a meaningful, thick description” (p. 232). In order to create this rich description, I collected multiple sources of data, including participant interviews, transcripts of group meetings, and participant-created artifacts (viz., journal responses and action plans). This multiplicity of data sources, known as triangulation (Yin, 1994), is another important component of case methodology. In addition, teacher partners were provided multiple opportunities to member-check the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by reading and reacting to the artifacts created by the group as well as my written interpretations. In order to best present the recursive data collection and analysis processes I engaged, I provide a brief overview of each type of data collected and then weave a description of how the data constantly informed my analysis and vice versa (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Teacher partner interviews. Each of the five teacher partners consented to three semi-structured interviews for a total of 15 interviews altogether (see Appendix A for interview protocols). The first round took place in the fall of 2015, during the initial stages of the study, and lasted approximately one hour. A second round of individual interviews took place in early June of 2016 at the conclusion of our year of study together. The duration of these interviews varied

from 45 to 120 minutes. In May of 2017, at the completion of the second year of the study, each teacher partner participated in a final interview that also lasted anywhere from 45 minutes to two hours. These interviews all took place in neutral locations such as libraries or coffee shops and were audio taped and then transcribed.

Group meetings. The GST-LED group met four times throughout the 2015-2016 school year for approximately two hours per session. The meetings took place at my home over a simple meal. All sessions were audiotaped and transcribed. The general goal for these meetings was to create a collaborative space for teachers to engage in multiple kinds of critical self-reflection in order to change our pedagogy and create more equitable classrooms for our students of Color.

Action plan support meetings. Mindful of CRT's critique of liberalism that castigates liberal-minded educators for moving too slow on issues of educational inequity, it was not enough for the teacher partners in this study to merely participate in thoughtful reflection and discussion about issues of race and racism. While these discussions were integral to creating our collaborative community and also to deepening our awareness of cultural issues, we knew these discussions had to lead to the enactment of substantive change in our classrooms. During the second interview, each teacher partner formulated at least one actionable goal they wanted to enact during the upcoming school year.

At this time, we decided that instead of meeting as a large group, rather, we would pair off based on the focus of the action plans. As the teacher partners realized this would potentially triple the demand on my time, we agreed that I would meet with each pair once in the winter and once in the spring as a "critical friend" (Bambino, 2003) in order to help monitor the action plans and push the work forward.

The first interview. As I was previously well acquainted with but did not have daily contact with each teacher partner, the first interview centered around re-establishing rapport and discussing the central questions of the study. I used a semi-structured interview protocol (Clandinin & Connelly, 1987), because, although I had already achieved a certain level of collegiality with these teacher partners, I wanted to make no assumptions about what kinds of experiences had formed their conceptions of race and racism. This semi-structured process provided me the flexibility I needed to ensure that I asked the same questions of each teacher, while also allowing for spontaneous conversation sparked from related questions. In addition, I used this interview to draw out from the teacher partners what kinds of professional development they had already experienced in relation to the central concepts of the study. This assisted me in the formulation of the agendas for our subsequent group sessions.

At this point I began an open coding process of data analysis (Straus & Corbin, 1990). By reading the interview transcripts line by line I was able to

identify a preliminary list of key ideas that connected to my conceptual framework. For example all of the teacher partners described in their personal beliefs that despite public conversation about “all students succeeding”, there was a recognition that not all students were receiving equal access to educational opportunities in their schools. There was also clear indication that while to some extent all of the teachers recognized racism on personal, professional, and structural levels, they also recognized that “there was always room to grow” (interview, 10/10/17). In fact I noted in these responses a sense of self-doubt that I wanted to explore further with them. This process helped me decide on the appropriate texts and resources to use as a foundation for future sessions.

GST-LED Group session #1: Setting norms and building trust. The first of our group sessions was particularly essential in establishing trust and a sense of common purpose within the group. It was important to me that we agreed upon a set of group norms that would guide our work. I chose Singleton and Linton’s (2005) text outlining how to hold courageous conversations about race and racism with others as a foundational text for this session, largely because the teacher partners were well acquainted with the text and had used many of the norms previously. These norms included: 1) stay engaged; 2) experience discomfort; 3) speak your truth; and 4) expect non-closure. We also agreed to keep our conversations within the group. As I knew everyone in the group, but

they did not necessarily know each other, we engaged in a few “ice-breakers” and get to know you activities that centered on sharing aspects of our personal and professional identities.

The next task was to explore the nature of the study. To do this I shared a bit about my parallel journeys as a classroom teacher and a graduate student and also about my commitment to work in both spaces. I communicated my belief that when we learn with and from one another, we better assist one another towards the ultimate goal of creating learning environments that are more social justice oriented, particularly around issues of race and racism. I explained what I thought would be my roles and responsibilities in the group, such as setting parts of the agenda, but that I also hoped we would negotiate leadership roles and responsibilities in response to the needs of the group members.

That led us to a discussion about the agenda for the next session. We agreed that it made sense to dedicate time during each session to the study of a critical text; something that would challenge our assumptions about the way we were engaging in this antiracist work. I informed the teacher partners that in order to engage in this work we would all be keeping a race reflective journal (Milner, 2008). To further support our commitment to reflection and critical dialogue, we also set aside time to share important moments from our teaching experiences. We agreed that I would be the one to set and monitor the time parameters and balance our need to be flexible with our need to stay on task.

I then introduced the piece I asked them to read and reflect on for the next session, “But good intentions are not enough” by scholar H. M. Milner IV (2006). I let them know I chose that text largely because of what surfaced in our first round of interviews. It seemed that all of us had attended the same sorts of professional development sessions that while good intentioned, did not address issues of race and racism on a deep enough level to elicit institutional change. The teacher partners reported that these previous sessions went something like this: a building or district administrator would present prepared remarks on issues of “the achievement gap”; we would review some related data; then we would all reflect on our racial identities and share out. There was a general message in these meetings that we had to change the way we were teaching but there were never any specific ideas about how to become “more culturally relevant,” nor was there ever a discussion of progress toward this goal. I responded that I hoped our GST-LED process would help us identify some specific things that needed to change and that we would help each other figure out how to do it together.

Session #2: Moving past good intentions. I opened this session (and all future sessions) with a time of greeting, sharing and eating. Over time we built a sense of trust and rapport among the group members as we shared critical moments in our life journeys. After eating we moved into a time of critical reading and knowledge creation followed by a time of reflection and application. I picked up our conversation from the first session about one of the key concerns I noticed

from the initial interviews: teacher concern over their own inefficacy when teaching students of Color. Despite professing commitments to educational equity and social justice teaching, every single teacher partner discussed concerns she had about "wanting to do better, but not knowing how." It was important, then, to explore what was meant by "doing better." What might that look like? What kept us from enacting change in our classrooms? As we considered our text for that evening (Milner's "Good Intentions"), I gave teachers a few moments to mark places in the text that held meaning for them. As we discussed those pieces, I asked the teacher partners to explain personal and/or professional experiences that lead them to connect to those parts of the text.

We then spoke specifically about two of the key concepts in the text, (1) deficit thinking directed at students of Color and (2) issues of power in the classroom. The teachers shared how our perceptions of who we are, specifically as racialized people, influenced our interactions with students in our classrooms. Again, while teachers could recount times when they actively resisted the deficit paradigms of youth of Color offered by popular media, we also discussed how we were not doing enough to ensure that our students were not adopting these negative frames of one another.

Their homework assignment for the next session was to read and prepare two texts from Pollock's (2008) volume entitled *Everyday Antiracism*, "Helping Students of Color Meet High Standards" by Ronald F. Ferguson (2008) and

"Teaching and Transcending Basic Skills" by Amanda Taylor (2008). They were also asked to write in their journals.

Session #3: Defying deficit thinking. The goal of this session was to pick up concepts from Milner's (2006) work in order to investigate the ways deficit models of thinking are prevalent in schools and what we can do to resist those negative narratives of students of Color. We worked with two texts from Pollock's (2008) volume entitled *Everyday Antiracism*, "Helping Students of Color Meet High Standards" by Ronald F. Ferguson (2008) and "Teaching and Transcending Basic Skills" by Amanda Taylor (2008). Ferguson's chapter described how important it is to hold students to high expectations for quality work while also providing meaningful help to them so they can complete the task. To deconstruct this text I asked teachers to create a matrix comparing two continua, degree of teacher help (low to high) and level of perfectionism expected (low to high). I then asked them to record specific student interactions in the boxes. We shared who was in our boxes and what led us to put them there. We discussed the recommendations offered by Ferguson and committed to using them in our classrooms.

We then took up the Taylor text. In this chapter, Taylor echoed Ferguson's ideas that teachers must have high expectations of their students but also must provide the specific kinds of help they need to be successful in the future. I presented the teachers with a list of structures that assist struggling students and

we discussed their use (e.g., sentence starters, graphic organizers, etc.). We then brainstormed other ways we could support our students to acquire greater levels of background knowledge and skills.

The homework for our last session was to read and prepare two more texts: *Aspiration and Practice: Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper in Social Studies* (Thornton, 1989) and Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1993).

Session #4: Power "with" versus power "over". In this last session we picked up the concept of power and how teachers use their power in the classroom. We again reviewed two texts, *Aspiration and Practice: Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper in Social Studies* (Thornton, 1989) and Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1993). In using Thornton (1989), my goal was to have the teacher partners reflect on how many curricular decisions they make every week and consider how those decisions impact students of Color. I asked them to list the major resources (audio/visual/text) they were using in their current unit and we evaluated the extent to which they were culturally relevant. This meant tracing our own thought processes for choosing each resource and then putting ourselves in our students' mindsets as well. The teachers reported this was a powerful exercise as it led them to "see" things from their students' points of view.

As we discussed the Freire text, the teacher partners reported that they

were very familiar with the banking model of education and that they all rejected it. However, after re-reading parts of the text and asking the teachers to reflect on the student-teacher relationship, what emerged was the realization that it wasn't always easy to relinquish the traditional role as "the teacher", meaning the person who controls the flow and pace of learning in the classroom. While the notion of learning from students and having students take ownership of the learning was described as an ideal, teachers were not sure how to maintain a stance of what we called "power with" versus "power over". We discussed how different pedagogical stances and ways of organizing the classroom could encourage us to move into a less oppressive space.

As these sessions and the school year came to a close, I continued to analyze the data. I drew from Charmaz's constant comparative model (2006) as well as coding designs from constructivist grounded theory paradigms (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014). Although I am not attempting to create new theory, I did gather data and conduct data analyses simultaneously. First, as I reviewed data from the group sessions, I looked for critical instances reported by teacher partners that detailed when issues of race and racism presented themselves in their curricula. Second, I looked for the extent to which the teacher partners appropriated or resisted specific cultural tools in the classroom when issues of race and racism were present. This early phase of data analysis is known as open or initial coding (Charmaz, 2006).

The second interview. As the second interview took place at the end of the school year and of our year of learning together, my intention was to collect the teachers' interpretations about two of their learning processes: 1) what they had learned about racism as a result of their participation in the group, and also 2) how this new learning had helped them identify goals for their action plans to be enacted the following school year. At this point I was reminded to balance my research interests with those of the teacher participants. As McIntyre (2008) explains, "the initial research questions [in her study] led to the emergence of new questions and new avenues of inquiry, all of which *informed* the research process rather than *demanded* that it flow a certain way" (p. 5). It was clear from these interviews that teachers were in very different places with regard to their conceptions of what needed to change about their practice and how they were negotiating those changes. In a similar fashion, I continued to negotiate my own conceptions of how teacher resistance was surfacing in the process.

Action planning meeting #1. At the start of our second year together, I met with pairs of teacher partners to help them refine their action plans. These action plans required teachers to develop goals that were connected to our course of study: (1) eliminate deficit-thinking paradigms; and (2) re-conceptualize and redistribute power in the classroom. In order to encourage anti-racist action, the teacher partners were also asked to explicitly address what changes they

would make to their classroom content, pedagogy and climate (Gay, 2010, p. 362).

Action planning meeting #2. The second action plan support meetings were held in the late winter/early spring of 2017. Whereas the first planning meeting focused on creating concrete action steps to take and also assisting with barriers that had emerged, the second meeting centered on making sense of the new moves the teachers were making in the classroom and then interpreting their own reactions as well as the reactions of their students.

The final interview. There were multiple purposes of this final interview. I asked the teacher partners about changes in their thinking, specifically about changes in the way they viewed the intersections of race and power in their classrooms. I then asked them to judge to what extent they thought that new learning led to their own pedagogical changes. I further asked them to evaluate the impact their action plan had on the students in their classroom. In addition I asked them about their participation in this research study and to what extent it helped them achieve their goals.

Once I had transcribed these final interviews, I engaged in a process of focused or selective coding. As Stake (2000) reminds us:

> The case is bounded, it is a system…(that) has working parts; it is purposive; it often has a self…a case is both a process of inquiry about the case and a product of that inquiry (p. 436).

At this point in the process I could look within each set of data and also at its totality. This enabled me to identify codes that connected to overarching themes, which then helped guide my interpretations of the data. Those findings will be discussed in the next chapter.

The Research Context

Setting. While placing my research study within the Central City Public School system may seem like an obvious choice (since I work there), this setting actually contains characteristics that make it a most appropriate choice. I will begin with some recent events that influenced the trajectory of this study. This section will conclude with a recounting of the participant recruitment process and brief biographies of each teacher partner.

A Critical incident: What is social studies doing about this? A few years ago there were two racially charged incidents in Central City high schools. The first involved a "prank" in which a Black baby doll was hung in a stairway with a noose around its neck. The other was reported as a food fight of sorts but in further comments from the community, it became clear that the disturbance was partially in response to racial tensions between US-born students of color and immigrant-born students of color (Smith & Walsh, 2013).

Both of these incidents appeared to shock many in the community--educators, families, and students alike. In the baby doll incident, it was largely reported that the students "didn't know any better" and while they meant the

prank as a joke toward a particular student, they had no understanding of the historical significance of a Black figure hung by a noose in effigy (Reeves, 2013). This led many people to wonder what kinds of history Central City high school students were learning about and what other information was not included in the curriculum.

The second incident served as a reminder that issues of racial identity/ethnicity and discrimination have not disappeared. The food fight may have started as a personal conflict between an African American and an African-born (Somali) American, but the underlying issues remained largely undiscussed. The immigrant students did not feel heard by the school administration or respected by their peers. This highlighted the struggles that immigrant students face in trying to hold on to their culture of origin while also carving out an identity within the larger U.S. and school cultures. It also raises the issue of historical conceptions of "African Americans" with current realities of (historical) African Americans and newer conceptions of (Black) Africans who are Americans. These incidents serve as a reminder of how social studies classrooms continue to be places where content and curriculum are contested and where student (and teacher) identities are negotiated (Barton & Levstik, 2004; Levstik & Tyson, 2005; Parker, 2010).

Soon after these incidents occurred, I spoke with Dr. Janice Stone, the District's Social Studies Content Lead. She had been recently called into a

meeting in the Superintendent's office to discuss the first incident in particular. "What is Social Studies doing about this?" was the question placed before her and a member of the CCPS Office of Equity and Diversity (personal communication, February 19, 2013). The answer to this pointed question was soon explored in the form of two meetings during the spring of 2013. Invited to attend were the secondary social studies department heads of 24 CCPS middle and high schools. I attended both meetings as the department lead for my school building. Over the course of these two meetings we engaged in what I experienced as a disjointed collection of lectures and activities that had very different purposes but were all perhaps designed to create a greater awareness of three particular issues: the achievement gap, vertical skills alignment, and cultural inclusion.

While I think teachers found many of the activities useful – for example, after we shared a particularly meaningful cultural memory, teachers reported they looked forward to using a similar activity in their own classrooms--I couldn't help but be confused about the larger purpose of the meeting. I was confused about the lack of clarity of the expectations for us: Was this time meant solely for our own edification? While I appreciated many of the conversations we had, they seemed to end that day. Were we supposed to reflect only on our own practices or were we supposed to return to our buildings and try to lead our colleague in similar activities? What were the next steps for this group, if any? And why didn't

we talk directly about the incidents and how to talk about them in our classrooms?

Reflecting on these questions also made me mourn what the meeting could have been. Instead of a district-mandated meeting with a top-down agenda, what if we, the meeting participants, had been encouraged to engage in that key question: What *is* social studies going to do about *this*? What if we had started with a clarification of the "this" we were all there to do something about? What if those discussions had led us to commit to regularly reflect upon our own experiences, and to critically examine how our values, beliefs and actions come to life everyday in our classrooms?

Similarly, since those incidents occurred, other racial incidents (the police killings of Michael Brown, Jamar Clark, and Philando Castille, just to name a few) have continued to raise questions about the intersections of race and power in our society and about the ways in which teachers respond or don't respond to these incidents. Despite the creation of Equity Teams in all CCPS schools, there has been no communication from the CCPS Equity and Diversity department, or the CCPS Social Studies department or any other department about how teachers can and must use these current events to address how the personal, professional, and systemic structures of racism influence the teaching and learning in our schools. The question, *what are we doing about this?* lingers.

Resegregation in the Central City Public Schools. In the 1990s the

Central City Public School District embarked on a re-organization plan for the city's schools. Citing concerns over a shrinking budget, the cost of busing, as well as the length of bus rides for young children; CCPS created three city attendance "zones" and assigned students to the closest school in their neighborhood. Following the general national trends of "neighborhood schools," the impact on integration efforts has been telling. The new system has created multiple racially isolated schools. For example, Johnson Middle School, located on the far north side of the city, is 90% students of color and the social studies department is 100% White and female. As I mentioned earlier, I don't mean to suggest that this demographic divide necessarily creates educational inequity; however, research (Goldenberg, 2014; McIntyre, 1997; Milner, 2003) suggests that if educators are to create learning environments where all students achieve, we (White women) must engage in critical reflection about: (1) our own understandings of how race and power situate us in our classrooms, (2) our students' experiences with race and power, and (3) what new conceptions of content, pedagogy, and climate exist to ensure equity in our classrooms. However, the district provides little support for this kind of practice. In sum, these experiences convinced me the CCPS social studies teachers could greatly benefit from a race-critical action research study.

Teacher partner recruitment. Several years ago, I had previously worked as the CCPS K-12 social studies coordinator. In that role it was my great

fortune to develop and implement a yearlong course of study based on disciplinary literacy and other best practices in social studies education. Over the three years that I held this position I was able to work with almost every secondary social studies teacher as we met in various grade level cohorts. Although my district level position ended and I returned to the classroom, I maintained contact with the middle grades teachers and we continued to gather informally from time to time to continue our professional conversations.

Once this dissertation proposal was approved, I reached out to this network of middle level educators and asked for their participation in this study. In that communication I outlined the anticipated time commitments involved in the study and also required that they self-identify as teachers interested in teaching for social justice and racial equity. What resulted was a purposeful sample (Merriam, 1998) that allowed me to gain insight into a specific population, in this case, veteran, White, female social studies teachers.

Teacher partners. In a descriptive case study project, rich, detailed descriptions of the research participants, context, and setting are essential if the reader is going to understand the meaning of the case. This project centered around six White, female, social studies teachers who shared meaningful commonalities. Each woman had taught for at least ten years within the Central City Public School system. Perhaps more importantly, each professed a desire to enact a greater sense of antiracism and social justice in their pedagogy. While all

of the teacher partners affirmed these professional aims, each one arrived at those conclusions through a story decidedly unique. What follows is a brief description of those journeys.

Kaitlyn. When I walked into Kaitlyn's class what struck me the most were faces. Nearly every inch of wall or chalkboard surface of this classroom was covered with the smiling faces of children from around the world. This fit with her description of her strengths:

> My strengths are to bring many voices and narratives to the classroom. I value multiple perspectives and lifelong learning. I feel like I get paid to learn and I love that part of my job. I also know that my students feel safe and liked and that is really important to me (Interview, 9/25/15).

Kaitlyn shared much about how her family and other life experiences shaped her as an educator. She grew up in a multi-racial family that moved around a lot. And while many of these memories were not positive, she explained how these experiences made her a better teacher:

> I am careful with new kids. I understand moving constantly. It has given me empathy, but it's always good to be reminded that each kid's story is unique and needs to be understood. I don't always take it into consideration, but I try.

Kaitlyn has taught in the CCPS for 15 years, 5 years at her most recent school. She said she is not afraid to talk about tough issues. At our first interview she

said she recently discussed both the Black Lives Matter movement and “the anti-Muslim rhetoric going around right now.” She expressed her belief in speaking openly in the classroom, especially about issues of race and racism.

Theresa. Theresa has taught in CCPS since 1991. She split her middle school teacher career at two different schools and embodies the idea of a true journeywoman, as nothing seems to faze her:

> It’s not like I was even born during the [1960s] race riots but I have seen my fair share of things… this was the toughest year ever to be honest. Kids and society are changing and if I don't change with them I will be left behind. I am trying to wrap my hands around all the issues with technology, social media, violence and lack of desire to "do school". I do wish middle school meant something (Interview, 10/3/15).

While Theresa bemoans the lack of district funding for technology and curriculum, she sticks with what she believes works best for students:

> I am all project based and hate to lecture. I also try to include as many "rewards" and positives in my classroom as possible. When we talk about current issues, like the whole BLM movement, I tend to listen more than speak to certain issues. This is the time to give kids a voice.

Theresa described her strengths as “providing a rigorous yet positive place for students to learn.” She also spoke of the importance of teamwork in creating equitable classrooms. All you can do, she said, “is surround yourself with good

people and be reflective" because after all, this job is a "marathon and not a sprint."

Rachel. When I met with Rachel, I knew I had never been in a more organized classroom. Everything had its place and there were lots of posters describing helpful thinking tools and processes on the walls. Although she prides herself on tackling difficult issues in the classroom, she says her style is more "subtle than out there." For example, to help her students process the killing of Michael Brown, she created an assignment where students had to write a letter to the Ferguson police or city council, expressing their feelings about the situation. She explained:

> I know other people were holding discussions or debates, but I wanted a more private activity. I didn't put a lot of pressure on kids to share at that point (Interview 10/14/15).

Rachel has worked all 16 years for the CCPS district at the same school and recently joined the Equity Team there. She said she did this because she is aware that if she doesn't seek out new ways of thinking, "I know I will go back to my own assumptions and the ways I was taught." She is hopeful that if everyone in her building is working on similar goals, they will all help each other become more culturally relevant and engaging.

Natalie. A strong proponent of multicultural, multilingual education, Natalie's walls are filled with political posters that encourage people of all stripes

to use their voices and change the world. Natalie says she is very comfortable with controversial topics in the school and in her classroom:

> Addressing race and racism, ableism, homophobia, sexism are all top priorities of mine. I stop everything and we discuss it if something is said. I believe very firmly that we need to talk about all these things to make change. Our students are often afraid to discuss, but yet very much want to. We have been discussing the Black Lives Matter protests recently. I am very comfortable in these conversations and encourage my students to grapple with these concepts often. I don't have all the answers, but I know confronting it head on and being willing to call out racism is a part of working to eradicate it (Interview, 10/1/15).

Natalie described how living in a multiracial, multilingual family helped her gain new perspectives on the intersections of "race, racism, power and privilege." She said she actively seeks out professional development opportunities that give her a space to reflect more about herself and also on how to make her classroom more equitable. She has taught in the CCPS district for 10 years in two different middle schools and had some prior teaching experience in a suburban district before that.

Helen. A self-professed multi-tasker, my interviews with Helen were largely spent on the go, most often preventing flare-ups between her two young children while we met in local parks. She loves being a teacher and a mom, she

explained, because the skills from one part of her life always seemed to help her with the other. Helen has taught in the CCPS district for 13 years in several different middle schools. She recently started working in her current school and noticed it is much more affluent than her previous schools. She was encouraged to find out that her students and the school community is very committed to social justice issues. She looks forward to holding debates in class.

Helen recounted what it felt like growing up as part of a politically liberal family in a conservative state. She said that although her parents encouraged her to use her voice she never really felt like she could because it was different from most of the voices around her. These experiences, she said, helped her define one important component of her classroom:

> So I try to be as unbiased as possible. And I will allow them to say what they need to, but I did struggle with that a little bit… but I do feel it is important as a social studies teacher for kids to be able to say what they want to say. And then I have to teach them to be respectful to differences. Every kid should feel like they are able to share what is important to them (Interview, 10/14/15).

Helen shared that she enjoys the complexities of being a teacher and that she relies on students to be her teacher. “As a White woman, I know there is so much I don’t know. But I also know that I don’t have to know it all – my students teach me everyday.”

Conclusion

One of the responsibilities of a qualitative researcher is to recognize the importance of speaking on behalf of another person (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I take this responsibility very seriously, and that sincerity guided the methodological choices I made. What follows in the next few chapters are the interpretations of the teacher partners in this study. I hope my telling accurately reflects their voices and their experiences.

Chapter 4: Teacher Moves Within the Classroom

The teacher partners in this study engaged in collaborative, race-critical, action research. We immersed ourselves in a meaningful examination of our conceptions of race and racism in order to change our practice and provide more equitable learning experiences for all of our students, particularly our students of Color. Within the action research tradition, we engaged in recursive processes of reflection and action. Beginning with a critical reflection process, we took up race-critical texts as cultural tools, examined the central concepts within them, and then explored questions about how those concepts could best be put to use in our classroom curricula, pedagogy, and climate. As we struggled through this critical reflection process, we appropriated components of antiracist pedagogy by methodically changing our teaching practices in order to better address the structural nature of racism. Specifically, we looked to reject deficit-thinking paradigms about our students and also to redefine power and control in our classrooms. This chapter, in part, chronicles the new race-visible teaching stances and identities we appropriated through our work together (Jupp et al., 2016).

However, because this work is complex and intersects teachers' individual psychology with sociocultural forces such as the historical and political contexts of the classroom, at times we resisted the tools offered to us and allowed the status quo to be maintained in our practices. Through race-evasive practices of

ignorance and resistance (Garrett & Segall, 2013) the teacher partners often avoided discussions of race, racism, and privilege. Despite our desire to enact meaningful changes, we resisted opportunities to seek out and include counternarratives (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002) of our students and appropriated tools of whiteness to enshrine our comfort with the status quo. This teacher resistance hindered us from more fully developing our antiracist pedagogy.

Within Thornton's (2005) description of teachers as gatekeepers, teachers are imbued with the power to make significant decisions about the curriculum, pedagogy, and climate of their classroom. As recent scholarship has shown, White teachers often make choices that for many reasons do not the meet the academic and social needs of their students of Color. Fortunately, there are many teacher educators and teaching professionals who want to become better aware of their students' needs and make more equitable and race-aware choices. I call this process enacting an antiracist pedagogy (Pollock, 2008). To assist my analysis of the process of enacting this pedagogy, I facilitated a race-critical turn by aligning the work of Gay (2010) with that of Thornton. Like Thornton, Gay's scholarship on culturally responsive teaching provides a simple and useful structure in which to frame this analysis. In a similar way to Thornton, Gay discusses the need for teachers who desire to become more culturally relevant and responsive to attend to three domains of their practice: curriculum, pedagogy and climate (p. 362). What follows in this chapter is an analysis of the

moves various teacher partners made within each of those domains over the course of our time together.

I debated how best to present the findings in this chapter. In many ways, the moves the teacher partners made were dynamic and recursive; they in fact signaled so much in response to one another that I initially determined to simply present that back and forth flow and discuss the race-visible or race-evasive nature of each move. After working with the data, however, I realized that in order to most clearly talk about the central themes, it was necessary to begin with a generous read of the data and point out some critical moments of growth in anti-racist teacher practice before providing a critique of those moves. The first section of this chapter thus reveals those positive moments as they occurred within the curricula, pedagogy, and climate of the teacher partner's classrooms. The second half of the chapter will return to many of the same moments from the study and thoughtfully critique the ways in which the teacher partners often enacted race-evasive identities that kept them from growing into a deeper antiracist teacher practice.

Appropriating Race-Visible Moves by Defying Deficit Thinking Through Classroom Curriculum and Content

Since all of the teacher partners self-identified as teachers interested in addressing issues of race and racism in classrooms, we were already aware of the existence of several educational inequities and we were actively working to

eliminate them. The specific content teachers choose to place before students, the teaching strategies teachers choose to use, and the ways in which teachers create an effective learning environment or climate can all reflect race-visible moves. What follows here is an accounting of those journeys. In this section I provide an overview of the main topics we discussed concerning deficit thinking in content and curriculum. This is followed by an analysis of the processes the teacher partners used with regards to re-structuring their curriculum.

In choosing the four critical texts for our course of study, one of my goals was to open up spaces to discuss the cultural relevance of the content of the units we taught. As teachers of global studies, it is imperative that we resist dominant White narratives of world history and culture and foreground the voices and perspectives of indigenous and marginalized communities. Although literature describing the experiences of world history teachers is rare, existing scholarship supports conclusions from other branches of the social studies about the likelihood of teachers to treat indigenous communities as the "other" (Chandler & Branscombe, 2015; Essed & Goldberg, 2002). Some of the teacher partner comments from our initial interview conversations served to heighten this concern.

In addition, Milner (2006) defines deficit thinking as, "teachers' perceptions that students of color do not already possess the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to succeed and learn" (p. 81). All of the teacher partners professed

an awareness of the ways in which deficit thinking about students of Color could have negative influences on the education of those students. The teacher partners recalled times when colleagues spoke about students of Color as "those kids," often implying negative assumptions about behavioral or academic performance. We also spoke frankly about times when we had fostered similar frustrations. However, after reading the Ferguson (2008) and Taylor (2008) pieces, it was apparent that some new ideas were taking hold.

Natalie: Raising the questions of moving beyond "good intentions".

In our initial group session it had become clear that the teacher partners initially were confident that because they were teaching about areas of the world such as Africa and South America, areas that matched the students' perceived ethnic heritage, the teacher partners were therefore meeting the students' needs for culturally relevant curriculum. After sharing "good intentioned" ideas about curriculum (e.g., setting slavery in a global context, providing multiple perspectives on Islam, etc.), Natalie shared a previous professional development experience that deepened our conversation. She described attending an out of district professional development session on assessment that was grounded in a curriculum context she found problematic. Her critical reflection helped us identify an issue to address:

> So they showed this video, you know, examples of 'good teaching' and one of the examples in the video was about how to bring up critical issues

> from around the word. So these students had to watch a video about Africa. And then they had to answer these questions. So first you see a room full of White kids looking at computers and all looking very studious, and then you see the video that they're watching which is like, kids in Africa with flies all over their faces and like, squalor, and [the instruction was about] how are we going to solve their future or something…
>
> And I just could not, I felt really yucky. There's no context, there's no discussion about how the classroom teacher would lead a discussion about this or how to make this more well rounded and at the end I said something, and all of the other teachers in the room were like – hey, they're learning about Africa, what's your problem, lady? And I repeated, but what about this classroom full of White kids and looking at images of Africa that are so stereotypical? And then I said I realize that this is a real world problem however [poverty, food insecurity], and they were like, well, you know, you didn't get all the context, and I was like okay, so this is ed-speak for we're not going to talk about that. And the facilitator was like, I'm sure there was more around this… and I was like, but this is our job as classroom teachers to think about what we put in front of kids…
>
> (Transcript, 11/17/15)

Natalie was speaking to her awareness of the typical and stereotypical ways in which Africa is portrayed largely within White classrooms. She experienced a

visceral disgust of the negative images placed before students without any critical examination of the context of those images. She also recognized that the other educators present resisted her critique and chose to stay colormute (Pollock, 2004) on the topic. When she raised her objections to the material presented, Natalie appropriated a race-visible and anti-racist stance.

Kaitlyn and Rachel: Moving their curriculum past good intentions.

In a subsequent session, I returned our conversation to a similar problematic curriculum concern. I asked if anyone was using the district-approved summative assessment for the unit on sub-Saharan Africa. Many said they were. The summative assessment asks students to evaluate colonial Great Britain's choice whether to intervene in Belgium's treatment of the Belgian Congo. On face value, this unit was filled with all of the "best practices" in social studies education: analysis of primary sources, considering alternative perspectives, etc., however, it situated White Europeans as the central historical actors, in control of their own destiny as well as those of the Congolese. In this assessment Black Africans were portrayed as victims, who had no agency in what was happening around them; their fate was at the mercy of Great Britain and Belgium. This shows how White colonial structures continue to influence social studies curriculum.

I don't argue here that the welfare of Black Africans in Congo was in fact at the mercy of their European colonizers. The brutality of King Leopold's Belgian

rule in Congo has been well documented (Hochschild, 1998). My argument is that this unit was chosen by those in power at the district level to represent the ideal learning situation about Africa. The central assessment question asked what Europeans would do, not what the Congolese would do. This assessment perpetuated a dominant, Eurocentric perspective about the continent of Africa and its people.

Further, this unit positioned the Congolese as less than, having no access to power or agency; they were not "able" to resist or make decisions within the oppressive regime that controlled the area. These discourses reinforced current stereotypes of Africa and Africans and potentially through association, African Americans. As the group continued our discussion, it was agreed upon that the use of this assessment was not acceptable. We determined to show Africa as a large and complex continent; made up of a multiplicity of cultural, linguistic, and socio-political systems. We also wanted to show that specific groups of Africans were negotiating the difficult processes of their worlds, just like we were. At the beginning of our discussion the teacher partners struggled with how to accomplish such a task:

> Kaitlyn: Do you mean we shouldn't teach about colonial Africa?
>
> Me: No I'm saying we absolutely should teach about colonial Africa, but we don't have to always portray the European side of things. And we don't have to portray African people always as victims, you know?

Theresa: But with limited time, how do we do that? (Transcript 3/15/16)

We engaged in further conversation about how we could approach the unit so that the central questions and perspectives would center on the agency of the people of the Congo. We discussed the possibility that if we thought more about power and position we could change the unit to defy deficit-thinking models and show how power and agency could be redefined, even within a brutally oppressive colonial system.

Unfortunately, the group never returned to write out a unit plan to specifically address the issues of agency in colonial Africa. However, Kaitlyn and Rachel focused their action plans on a related topic. As these two teachers taught the same grade level in the same building and had some common planning time, they worked together on this action plan. They decided to scrap the unit on Africa that they had previously taught and instead devised a more contemporary unit about global food security. Their summative assessment centered on sub-Saharan Africa. Their goal was to engage students in an inquiry in which they would "become" actors in the story and therefore promote the perspectives and agency of local African food workers. As the students took up these personae, they would research background information about the organization they represented, the specific food challenge their organization was working on, as well as the challenges and successes they encountered along the way.

One thing these two teachers were wary of was falling into the trap of reifying stereotypes of people in sub-Saharan Africa. In their unit introduction, Kaitlyn and Rachel were sure to show many different types of physical spaces on the continent, including major cities like Lagos and Nairobi, alongside more picturesque landscapes like the Niger River and Mount Kilimanjaro. They also positioned the issues of food security as a global concern; food desserts existed in Africa but also in the United States. They further wanted to be sure not to position entire groups of people as victims or non-actors in their own lives. In our action planning meetings we debated how to present the complicated world of agriculture production in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa:

> Rachel: It's true that so many of these NGOs [non-governmental organizations] are run by White people; Europeans even Americans, how do we balance that? (Transcript 11/9/16)

We came up with the idea to use a TED Talks video about this very issue. Ernesto Sirolli's (2012) account of his own work on food development in Africa was a perfect tool to use to introduce the important concept that respect for indigenous knowledge and voices is the best way to build a true partnership with a community. In the video Sirolli recounts what everyone in the Italian-based NGO he worked for would describe as the perfect project: growing tomatoes in a nutrient-rich river valley in Zambia. The government workers were baffled when they couldn't convince any of the local villagers to sign on to the project. Only

when the tomato plants were gorged upon by local groups of hippopotamus did the reason for the local indifference to the project become clear. When asked after the fact, why the locals did not inform the do-gooders about the futility of the project, the locals responded with a simple phrase, “you never asked.”

Rachel and Kaitlyn were then able to use this introduction as a tool for students to judge the cultural responsiveness of the NGO they were studying. The students had to analyze to what extent the local actors had given input on and provided leadership for the project. In this way the focus of the learning was not on White intervention in Africa, but rather on the ways in which members of African cultures and societies worked to address the complex issues of their lives.

When I asked Kaitlyn and Rachel in their final interview about the impact of this unit, they reported about how engaging the project was for their students of Color:

> Kaitlyn: You know, the thing we definitely got the most positive feedback on last year was the food project; the kids loved that project.
>
> Rachel: Yes they did [love the project]. And so I also think most students really had their eyes opened to some things. And they no longer thought of Africa as one place or a place of only desolation. And that the US has these problems too [food insecurity], you know? (Transcript 6/23/17)

Through this change in curriculum, the teacher partners noticed growth in their student's awareness of global concerns. I then asked them what other changes they noticed in the students' perspectives:

> Me: What else do you think was different about how the students experienced this unit?
>
> Kaitlyn: I'm just so, so pleased with how everything went. I didn't feel like we were telling the students what [living in Africa] was like, they experienced it.
>
> Rachel: Yes and when I think about Lashawna and Destiny's presentation, like they really got into it; they were all ready to start fundraising for the local school, like the people had become really important to them. (Transcript 6/23/17)

In some ways these comments are problematic and I will speak to those issues in the next section. If, however, I give this exchange a generous read, what is also revealed is that the teachers on some level accomplished their goals. By redesigning their curriculum they refused to promote the district supported Eurocentric worldview of the African continent and its people. By developing a more authentic summative assessment they engaged their students in more engaging ways. Through student feedback the teacher partners came away with a sense that their students enjoyed this real-world application because it provided the students an opportunity to experience learning in ways they hadn't before.

For Kaitlyn and Rachel, having the chance to work collaboratively on this action plan provided them the impetus they needed to adopt content and pedagogy that were more culturally relevant.

Natalie and Theresa: Re-conceiving power by re-structuring classroom pedagogy.

Gay (2010) defines culturally responsive teaching as, "using cultural knowledge to inform instructional decisions and actions, and establishing congruency between classroom instructional techniques and [the learner]" (p. 365). One way we explored this concept of culturally responsive teaching was by discussing how teachers use power in classrooms. We used the Thornton (1989) and Freire (2000) texts as foundations for our work. In our group conversations, the teacher partners recognized that while they often disavowed "banking" notions of teaching (p. 53) as oppressive and wrong, they could not claim to always embody the type of liberated educator Freire espoused. We discussed the professional expectations of teachers to "maintain order" in their classrooms; indeed positive teacher evaluations depend upon it. The teacher partners felt this disconnect and wanted to re-focus on what they saw as the "way they wanted to be" in the classroom.

Natalie and Theresa decided to focus on Freire's notion of the teacher-student dilemma (2000, pp. 60-64) in their action plans. These teacher partners said they wanted to completely re-structure the physical space of their

classrooms as well as the design of their daily routines. They worked on a curriculum that would draw out student knowledge and experience in relation to current issues in the community. Conceived within notions of service learning and Socratic seminar methods, their goal was to empower students to interrogate local issues, such as police brutality and racial profiling, on systemic levels.

At the conclusion of our final interview it became clear that while many of the curriculum topics and routines were planned collaboratively by Theresa and Natalie, this collaboration did not ensure comparable implementation. While Theresa maintained a strong teacher-centered orientation, Natalie experimented with power sharing in her classroom. First she described how she hoped changing the structure of her classroom would create a more liberating and engaging learning environment for her students:

> So as we [the GST-LED group] read Paolo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" and we talked a lot about how do we take ourselves out of that role of oppressor, even though we work as part of that system that is all about oppression? But really our hope is to be undoing oppression through education. So I really wanted to do circles more, like even every day, so we did.
>
> At first it was me bringing up different topics based on an interest survey that I did with them. And bringing in articles and things and I brought in a talking piece, and then we learned how to use accountable talk… you

know, to create a structure for doing Socratic seminar every single day. But I sat in it as well, like I didn't take myself out of it like you would for a Socratic seminar. And I would also ask questions and try to get people to say more. And make connections where appropriate. (Transcript 6/19/17)

Although she was already familiar with the Socratic seminar method, Natalie improved upon this practice by creating new culturally responsive routines such as using a discussion circle everyday. This type of a pedagogical move signals to the students that all voices are welcome and all participants are equal. In addition, bringing in current events issues for discussion shows the students that this is a space where they can bring in their experiences, feelings, and opinions. As this new student-teacher relationship brought her both positive benefits as well as challenges, Natalie shared the complexities of the moves she and her students were making:

> And then I shifted that to having the students lead the circle. And that was successful sometimes and then sometimes not. And it was really interesting. The kids, it was almost like they treated me like a peer in this class. Like the way they talk with me and treat me in this class is so different from every other class they had. And sometimes that seemed really positive to me and sometimes it was really not.
>
> Sometimes, like, I will have some of these kids later in the day and they would never talk to me the way they do in this class… but [in this class]

> they are kind of really rude and really mean and they kind of do this group thing where they are all in it together like they think, yep, we're going to do this. We're going to talk this way to you and we're all in on it. And it's really strange because then I'll see them three hours later and they'll be like "hi teacher so and so", and be so different. And so it was interesting because obviously they did feel a sense of empowerment in the class but then sometimes what they did with that power was not a positive thing, for me at least. (Transcript 6/19/17)

As she appropriated more culturally responsive moves, these new practices led to unfamiliar structures of power in Natalie's classroom. This re-structuring allowed the students to use their voices in new ways and to practice using power in the classroom. At times this student empowerment led to a different positioning of the teacher, one that Natalie didn't understand or recognize. In our last interview together, I pressed Natalie to interrogate what she thought was going on for her students:

> Yeah. That has been for me like the critical reflection. Like why did that happen? I'm not quite sure... And then when I gave reflection surveys to the students and I asked like what was good, what was bad, what should we do different? The surveys came back so overwhelmingly positive. Like, when they write as individuals and not as a group, they are really positive and so I'm like, what? What is this about? Like, I would never have

> thought you felt this way, you know, that you liked the class just because of those actions towards me sometimes. (Transcript 6/19/17)

Although her student's reactions confused her, in this feedback about the class, Natalie recognized that in re-structuring her classroom, she did provide a space where students could find their voice, extend their power, and engage in learning that was meaningful to them:

> And even when we were talking about next year and they were like, this class will be an elective next year right? I said actually no, I didn't think so, that it was just a one-time thing, and they were really upset. And they wanted to let the Administration know some things about why this class should offered next year and so I said I would take notes and send them to the Principal and I just sat there and wrote while they talked and they said things like: We love this class so much, it's about the real world and about things that really matter, and we learned so much from each other and not just the teacher, and I make connections between this class and my real life… So I know that they saw so much value in this class and in having a voice and in talking about things that mattered to them. (Transcript 6/19/17)

This account is another indication that Natalie's students recognized what a positive experience this class was and actually enacted their newly acquired sense of empowerment by speaking their truth to the school administration.

Eventually, Natalie's critical reflections helped her empathize with her students and understand better the ways in which power are denied to them:

> And as I think more about it from their point of view, you know, it made sense too. Like they must think: here I go from room to room and in all my other classes there is this authoritarian figure telling us what to do but in here it is not like that and we have the chance to have the power and so we're going to take it and show you what it feels like for us all the rest of the day.
>
> In the end, I've just been part of so many conversations in this class that have been so eye opening. Like, maybe the most important thing was that I didn't have to be so in control all the time. Like on some days I would be like this class isn't working but then they would come in the next day and be like, can we just talk –about this thing that happened in the news– and so I know they see the value enough to own it and that for me has been a real learning experience. So it really goes to show how much they need those spaces. (Transcript 6/19/17)

In sum, these changes Natalie made to her practice did shift her conceptions of what it meant to be an anti-racist teacher. In many ways she foregrounded the voices and knowledges of her students of Color and empowered them to direct their own learning. In so doing, she enacted a race visible White teacher identity

that allowed her to witness how her students “see” teachers and other authority figures at school.

Helen: Creating a caring classroom climate.

Gay (2010) concedes that research on classroom climate can be elusive because it encompasses everything that goes on in a classroom and yet is difficult to define. A culturally responsive classroom climate would include a space where students of Color would see themselves reflected positively in the content of the curriculum and also where students of Color would experience the kinds of *high help, high perfectionism* environments that Ferguson (2008) espouses. Gay (2010) also hints that teachers who succeed in building positive climates for students of Color typify a kind of caring that teachers must embody in order for students of Color to connect with the curriculum that the teacher is enacting (p. 368). This is not easy to do, and this exchange illustrates how the teacher partners helped push each other’s thinking around caring and climate:

> Natalie: So how do we encourage those kids too, like you know, like the ones that some would say are the “behavior problem” kids, how do I encourage them to say all the really insightful brilliant things they are saying in a way that others will hear them, like how do I encourage that in the classroom?
>
> Kaitlyn: Right? Like, I’m trying to figure out how to empower people… how to make them feel like this is a place I want to be… and this is a place that

> makes my brain hurt and makes my brain feel on fire and excited… how do I get them to love that?
>
> Rachel: Yeah… But that is a mind shift, right? Like, to where, yeah, I can't expect that just because I experienced school a certain way, you know, the "white way", that the students are going to meet me in that same place. And so I would say we [teachers] have to change. (Transcript 2/18/16)

If we look past the problematic language that some of the teacher partners used in this exchange (e.g., "behavior problem kids") it also became evident that these discussions of classroom climate led the teacher partners to push deeper into particular classroom discourses about race that we all found problematic. Here the teacher partners did not evade the challenges they felt in educating all of their students. To some degree they recognized the role that their own Whiteness played in restricting their ability to meet the needs of their students of Color and they realized that "we would have to change."

Let it be said that when we talk about improving the climate of a heterogeneous classroom, we are talking about all of the interactions that happen there: relationships between students and teachers, relationships between students and the curriculum, etc. Clearly as all of the teacher partners were enacting their action plans around curriculum and pedagogy, these decisions also created an impact on the classroom climate. However, climate concerns

were especially salient for Helen. Helen was the only global studies teacher in her building and so there was no opportunity to engage in teacher partner collaboration other than within action planning meetings that she and I held together. In her action plan Helen said she wanted to tackle and reverse what she saw as a disturbing discourse in her school around the notions of differentiation for gifted and talented students:

> Helen: "Gifted and talented," what do those words even mean? Like you alone are the gifted one? That's crazy. All my students have gifts and talents; I just have to figure out how to encourage them to bring those out. And is this only based on those test scores? Is that what you're basing it on, like, that's a code for something else, don't you think? (Transcript 11/16/16)

We went on to discuss how the realities around "gifted and talented" (G/T) programs were often racialized and the "code" Helen referred to reserved G/T services for White students. Although the GST-LED group did not read specific texts related to G/T programs, Helen and I did review the work of Ford & Grantham (2003) which illustrates some of the issues involved in the underrepresentation of students of color in G/T programs. This work is related to some of the other texts we read about deficit thinking paradigms in relation to students of Color and we were able to use this research to clarify the changes Helen envisioned for her classroom.

Although Helen's school did offer G/T programs that she surmised were not doing enough to identify gifted students of Color, two things kept her from tackling that problem directly: she admitted that because she was recently hired at this school, she "wasn't deeply involved in those conversations," (Transcript 11/16/16). In addition, because no students were pulled out of her class for these gifted services Helen could address her concerns within the confines of her own classroom. Helen described how she refused to "segregate her students in any way" (Transcript 11/16/16) and began devising her stance as an anti-racist classroom teacher. As she and I talked, her thinking around specific interventions she wanted to implement in an upcoming research unit became clear:

> Helen: So the first thing is to give them a lot of choice and make it fun for them. I decided to do that inverted history thing. You know I started with the 1950s and civil rights around the world back then and then we connected everything to today, to all the social justice issues going on today. This way things are already more culturally relevant and engaging for them.
>
> The next thing is really just a practical thing, but I know the parents of my White kids will help secure all kinds of resources for their students… so I am really thinking ahead about how to support students who won't have access to extra funds and resources and [my English Language Arts (ELA)] partner is already collecting, like, art supplies from other teachers

> and we put in for a grant and I feel like there is some equity in action you know?
>
> Then there are the skills… [My ELA partner] and I are already working together on dividing the students up into small groups for direct instruction on specific research skills. And we decided that every small group will have a task, so it won't feel like, these kids can do it on their own and these kids can't… We want all the students to feel like they have ownership over their project. (Transcript 11/16/16)

Our discussion about her action plan revealed that Helen had a strong sense about what would make her classroom even more culturally responsive. In addition, Helen appropriated ideas from Taylor (2008) and Ferguson (2008) about engaging students in high-level tasks while also providing the explicit assistance needed in order to succeed on those tasks.

Moreover, Helen planned changes to her curriculum and her pedagogy in order to create a stronger, more positive climate for all students in her classroom. One way she accomplished this was to intentionally create expectations of cooperative effort and growth mindset. In our last interview together I asked her about the impact of this change:

> Well, one thing we ended up doing that I think helped overall was our effort rubric. Yeah, we totally focused on effort. And it worked really well because we would be like, yep that's a four. And it was really hard to get a

> four because it all based on helping each other out, like perseverance and cooperation and some things with organization. And so we worked on that and everyone rated themselves at different times and we could show how if they gave more effort, it helped their grades. (Transcript 6/23/17)

Helen intimated that the use of the effort rubric changed how she and the students talked about success in the classroom. Over the course of the year they developed a learning environment where students were expected to become responsible for their own learning. If they encountered an obstacle to learning, the students had been taught to use several problem-solving strategies, some based on individual work and some more cooperative in nature. I asked how she was able to structure the climate of the room in that way and she revealed how she intentionally met not only the academic but also the social needs of her students:

> I guess I have always been very focused on the social-emotional needs of my students. I instigated a routine called “trust buddies” where they have to write positive messages to each other. Students who are not feeling positive also have the choice to write about their negative feelings, but they have to come up with or use a strategy to deal with that. It really helps the students get to know each other. And soon enough the kids are reminding each other to use their strategies. (Transcript 6/23/17)

By integrating several culturally responsive practices, Helen successfully differentiated her instruction in order to meet the needs of all of her students. I also asked her to critique the changes in her practice with regards to her desire to change the deficit-thinking discourses in her school:

> Yeah, it does still drive me crazy because I have a lot of brain power in that room and just because some students can't afford the resources to do a fancy project does not mean they can't think just as critically as my other students. And the ways I hear some parents, and some teachers really, talking about my kids really makes me mad.
>
> There are so many areas we need to work on. Like, I teach debate after school and so many of my students of color would be awesome at it but they don't have transportation home, well we do have transportation home afterschool but as far as the meets and getting picked up, they don't have a way to get home after and so they don't join and so it is my kids that do have rides and the money to join and to me, I do feel like there is an equity thing there.
>
> But I feel like our [grade level] team is really changing things. [The science teacher] and I are just making changes and we hope everyone else gets on board. Like, we're going to keep focusing on the [college readiness] skills that our kids need. And we're going to do a joint project where the

> students will investigate a local topic or issue they want to change and then have to trace back the history of it.
>
> That way they can make real personal connections and make connections to the standards and then to the real world, so I think that will continue what we have started here. (Transcript 6/23/17)

Although Helen was not able to collaborate with other socials studies educators in her building, she did collaborate with her grade-level team teachers on this project. Helen's action plan reiterated the essential connections between curriculum, pedagogy and climate. She provided a rigorous, student-centered curriculum that met the learning needs of all students; she embraced pedagogical changes to positively impact the relationships between and among students and teachers; and she constructed a learning environment that attended to the well being of her students.

Resisting Race-Visibility and Appropriating Race-Evasive Stances

There of course is no one right way to become an antiracist teacher. That being said, proponents of antiracist pedagogy do agree that one key component in becoming a stronger antiracist teacher is a dedication to thoughtful reflection (Milner, 2003, 2007; Ravitch & Wirth, 2007). The teacher partners described here illustrated this race-critical action research process: critical reflection led to changes in the classroom, which led to further critical reflection. Further, through this process of critical self-reflection, we defined what enacting a deeper sense of

antiracist pedagogy would look like in each of our classrooms. While none of the teacher partners would say they have "arrived" as an antiracist pedagogue, their action plans evidence their journeys towards providing a culturally relevant, responsive, and responsible learning environment for their students.

As Jupp et al., (2016) delineate scholarship on White teacher identity has often served to ensconce a particular type of identity that is resistant to dealing with issues of race and racism in classrooms. While it is encouraging to note that many of the teacher partners in this study successfully appropriated some measure of culturally responsive teaching pedagogy and enhanced their anti-racist teacher stances, there were also times when the teacher partners resisted the cultural tools offered, and instead appropriated race-evasive White teacher identities. In an effort to reject binary and dichotomous thinking about these moves, in this section I return to a few of the previously interpreted experiences and turn a more critical eye to the level of resistance the teacher partners exemplified. The journeys of the teacher partners are evidenced particularly by the action plans they developed.

Kaitlyn and Rachel: The power to choose, or not choose, antiracist pedagogy

Let me first return to Kaitlyn and Rachel's interpretations of the success of the new summative assessment that they created for their unit on Africa. As this teacher pair reflected on what it meant for them to be antiracist educators, they

saw a need to fundamentally change how they engaged their students with cultures from around the world. In their action plan they wanted to ensure that their curriculum would challenge conventional stereotypes and provide students with a new perspective, one based on agency rather than victimhood. This was an ambitious task, one that accomplished many of the goals the teacher partners envisioned, but one that also revealed new questions for reflection.

While the comments the students expressed at the end of the unit may represent a greater level of engagement for some, it was not clear to what extent the students had connected issues of food insecurity with larger issues of racism or colonialism, whether in sub-Saharan Africa or the US. Although in many ways these two teachers successfully changed their curriculum to reduce deficit-thinking models of the cultural groups they were studying and also to present possibilities of agency and power within those cultures, the students may have retained notions of race and racism on only individual and not societal levels. In so doing, Kaitlyn and Rachel simultaneously appropriated new conceptions of how dominant White educational discourses often ignore issues of race and racism while at the same time, they resisted an opportunity to provide their students greater access to critical forms of thinking about such issues.

Rachel and Kaitlyn continued to exemplify this dissonance when I asked the teachers how much their own perspectives about race and racism had

changed, particularly in regards to deficit thinking and issues of power and control in their classrooms:

> Kaitlyn: There are always issues we need to work on… I think for me, I still want to be in control more than I think I do… I still don't know, because to me the project was too nebulous at times, like, the expectations were not clear enough, and so that really bothered me, but for them, it was the favorite thing they did all year.
>
> So that has me thinking too about… I didn't like the pace, I am really thinking about the way I do my units which is like, here are the objectives, and here is what we're going to learn, and we've packed that up in a nice, neat little package and then we'll move on… so now I have to think about that.
>
> I think for them, I mean it was really creative, I mean for about two weeks it was just them working on stuff, and everyone had their own objective and I think it was a really good project to do, but we can't always do that, like we do need to do some skills and some analytical thinking and to read and write and…
>
> Rachel: Right, like we talked about [in the GST-LED group] how to do both, like have high expectations for the project and then give help around skills, but I don't think we did that enough… So I'm still trying to figure that out, the differentiation piece… but maybe that's why the project was so

> successful for all the kids because my GT kids were learning from my low readers about this farming project in Kenya, you know what I mean? (Transcript 6/20/17)

In this assessment of how their teaching practice changed, Kaitlyn and Rachel show how they are beginning to appropriate a more culturally aware and student-centered teaching practice while simultaneously wondering about the ongoing impact of these changes. Kaitlyn hints that the individualized learning, while appealing to her students, was something that provided new levels of stress for her, and as such, she seems to resist embracing this style of teaching all the time. Likewise, Rachel reflects on how the project served as a way to equalize student relationships in her class, she struggled with to providing a learning environment that held all students to high expectations while also providing direct skill support where needed.

Interestingly, neither teacher directly addressed the extent to which their thinking about issues of race and racism had changed. Rather, they shared their opinions about the project more broadly. This could reflect a deeper sense of resistance about their willingness to critique their teaching practices and the impacts of those practices on their students.

In addition, their recollections hint at a greater need to involve students of Color with the planning of future instruction. Although at the end of the school year Kaitlyn and Rachel asked their students to reflect on what they enjoyed or

would change about the class, the teachers did not provide an opportunity for the students to critique the unit of Africa specifically. Ironically, while it was important to them to correct a historical situation of the paternalistic relationship between White interveners in Africa by insisting on the involvement of African people in the food insecurity project, these teacher partners placed their students within a similar paternalistic relationship. When it came to understanding what the students of Color in this classroom needed to feel a greater sense of empowerment, those students also could have said to their teachers, “you never asked.”

For Kaitlyn and Rachel, committing to a deeper sense of antiracism meant looking more deeply at the content of their curriculum. This afforded them the chance to critique traditional Euro-centric forms of curriculum that reinforce stereotypes and deficit-thinking models of people of Color from around the world. Their action plan did not specifically outline other ways in which these two teachers could have addressed issues of race and racism in their classrooms, particularly the voices of their own students. Their journey highlights the complexities of antiracist work: sometimes a deep sense of commitment to one form of antiracism can restrict a wider view of the impact on the entire classroom environment.

Theresa: Resistance or uncertainty?

Second, let me return to the work that Natalie and Theresa embarked upon. I hinted earlier that Theresa's journey was quite a bit different from that of Natalie. Although they taught the same grade level in the same building, they did not have common planning time and were not able to work together except during initial conversations about their actions plans. While Theresa appeared committed to making the same changes to her teaching practice that she originally discussed with Natalie, Theresa experienced very different outcomes in her classroom. In those preliminary conversations, Theresa, like Natalie, described developing a greater sense of awareness about issues of race and racism:

> Theresa: You know I use to think, well, I've taught at blah blah school and I've taught in the city for blah blah blah years and I know what I'm doing and ah, no I don't… No I don't. Right, like, I'm not racist and I don't have these problems and really? Yes I do, it's so humbling…super humbling. So everyday I analyze like, how am I interacting with adults that don't look like me and how am I interacting with kids who don't look like me and how do they think I perceive them? Am I holding them to high enough standards? And every day that is a struggle and everyday, like how do you value that especially given what I teach, you know, how do I incorporate all of that? (Transcript 11/10/16)

Through these words, Theresa denotes an antiracist teacher who is looking out for all of the right things. She is aware that as a White teacher it is incumbent upon her to become more aware of her thoughts and actions in order to limit the effects of her unconscious bias towards others. Further, she appears to be asking herself all of the right reflective questions about the extent to which her antiracist teaching practice is ensuring an equitable educational experience for all of her students.

Early in our year of learning together, Theresa brought forward a significant critically reflective moment that influenced the direction of the GST-LED group. After reading and discussing Freire (2000), one critical issue we raised was about using student voice and counterstories (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Terry & Howard, 2013) to distribute power in the classroom. Teachers recounted the pressure they often felt to stay in control and monitor compliance with behavior expectations. We detailed times when these school rules felt oppressive even to us; we imagined what it would feel like for our students. Theresa's observation led us to re-imagine student misbehavior as a form of positive resistance and this in turn led to some new conceptions of pedagogy for the group:

> You know this was a big "a-ha" moment for me. I think this year, everything was so hard and everything I had been doing [successfully] stopped working. It just quit working. And I get it, like, not every kiddo is

> going to learn from me or want to be here every day and that's okay, so I would usually just send them to [an alternative instruction room]. But now I'm thinking, okay, don't be such an old, White lady… because I'm thinking more and more about how these are the kids I need in my room the most, you know, they always have the most to say and I don't have to take it (student misbehavior) as disrespect or defiance, you know? We can all be teachers? I just don't know how to do that yet… (Transcript 2/18/16)

Here Theresa gives a heartfelt testimonial about the ideal teacher she wishes to embody, along with the ways in which she falls short of that ideal. As she reflects on her own racial identity she is aware that she has the power to choose to allow her implicit biases to define her teaching practice or choose a more antiracist approach.

By the last year of the project, Theresa and Natalie planned to re-structure power in their classrooms through greater use of student voice. As both of these teachers were acquainted with Socratic seminars, they each committed to using these dialogues on a regular basis. Whereas Natalie integrated a daily circle dialogue approach, Theresa decided to engage in this practice once a week. At first Theresa recounted students enjoying the new routines. She described students talking about things they were learning about in class as well as other issues that were important to them. However, in one instance, Theresa recounted an exchange between two students of color that she did not know how to handle:

> You know its interesting because I have a student [receiving Special Education services] who is mainstreamed and he sits right there and he asks me you know, “Ms. Theresa, didn’t they use the racial slur of “Jap” in World War Two?” And then I have a student of Asian descent, well the first kid is a student of African American descent and he’s looking right at this student of Asian descent and then he said something else just totally inappropriate and I thought, okay, how am I going to react to this? Because you know you have like that one second to react and you know everyone is looking at you and thinking ooh, what is [Ms. Theresa] going to do with this? And I can’t remember exactly what I did, I think I let the kids take care of that and then I gave some closing remarks about racial slurs then and now and I just really remember how uncomfortable the whole thing was. You could tell he was uncomfortable and that others were uncomfortable and what do you do with that? (Transcript 6/22/17)

In this recollection, Theresa’s uncertainty about how to react is clear but also potentially problematic. There are many instances when teachers have to make split-second decisions and hope that their choices do not cause harm. However, causing harm is a very real consequence for students of Color if White teachers are not prepared to adequately address issues of race and racism when they are presented in classrooms.

In this instance, even though Theresa is aware that this type of a racially charged moment demands that she address it, she resists getting involved and "lets the kids take care of it." Instead of working through the issue either with the two boys or with the entire class Theresa chose to stay colormute. By ignoring this moment she may have communicated messages about whether or not racialized topics of conversation should be avoided in this class. Students may also have learned that it was not safe to have these kinds of discussions at all.

In our final interview together it became clear that the challenges she encountered as she attempted changes to her teaching practice became too much and she moved away from the steps in her action plan. I asked Theresa to recount what had happened:

> Well… I don't know. Things just weren't working right. Like, we'd get on a roll, where lots of students wanted to share, which was great. But then, some students just couldn't handle it, you know? Like, they couldn't handle the structure. And they [the Administration] took away our room, whatever you call that place where you send a kid when they need some space, a timeout or whatever, you know the take a break room, the AIR [alternative instruction room] room… that disappeared. All of the support this year was gone, no SpEd [Special Education] push in, no ELL [English Language Learner] push in, no student teachers, so it was just like me and these

> kids. And a lot of kids came to us from other places and they had a lot of issues and that was tough. (Transcript 6/22/17)

In this description Theresa continues to express uncertainty about why the changes she made to her teaching practice resulted in negative experiences for herself and her students. However, in this reflection she seems to have reverted into deficit modes of thinking about her students. When she talks about "me and these kids" clearly the students she is talking about, students receiving special education services and English language learners, are students of Color and because they had a "lot of issues," she was unable and unwilling to appropriate the tools she would need in order to structure a culturally responsive and academically successful learning environment for them.

At the conclusion of our last interview together, I asked Theresa what she thought would help her and other teachers deepen their understanding of antiracist teaching practice:

> I just think that as a district and as a school we can do a better job. I don't know what that would look like, though, because we're always changing. Like this year was different from last year, which was different from the year before and we keep drastically changing... And maybe that is my big aha… That we always need to keep learning. That we have to keep trying to get better at what we're doing… I also think we [teachers] need more say in what we are doing. I think we're missing out on that self-directed

> piece. But it's not supported or there isn't time in the schedule for it… so, how do you keep up with it all? I'm tired, you now. I love it, but I'm tired. (Transcript 6/22/17)

In this recollection Theresa seems to understand that there is a great need to do better (i.e. teach in ways that will eliminate educational barriers and opportunity gaps for students of color) and she is committed to continuing to learn how to do better for her students. At the same time, the language she uses here hints at the ways in which whiteness offers a way to evade responsibility and action. By placing blame on nebulous entities such as the pace of change and the lack of time provided by the district Theresa does not locate herself within that structurally racist system of education that affords power and privilege to her but denies the same to her students.

Theresa's journey illustrates the difficulties of enacting a deeper sense of antiracist pedagogy in the classroom. While Theresa consistently reflected on her racial identity and the systemic ways racism works to restrict culturally responsive teaching practices, she could not use those tools to maintain the kinds of meaningful changes that she desired to make. Her experiences reinforce the belief that asking questions and engaging in critical reflection, while key components of antiracist pedagogy, is not sufficient, rather, antiracist teachers need to enact and sustain meaningful changes in their classrooms.

Natalie: The having of more good intentions.

It is also important to take a second look at Natalie's journey with re-structuring power in her classroom. In many ways Natalie personified an ideal anti-racist teacher: she invited her students of Color to find and use their voices in a way that allowed them to talk back to the traditional, White, and oppressive facets of education. At the same time, when she said, "And so it was interesting because obviously they did feel a sense of empowerment in the class but then sometimes what they did with that power was not a positive thing, for me at least," Natalie initially interpreted her students' reactions as resistance on a personal level and did not connect those actions to a larger, systemic experience of race and racism in her classroom. In a sense, Natalie felt oppressed when her students took over control of the classroom and could not see at first that her students were replicating dominant narratives of power in classrooms led by White teachers and by extension of other White authority figures (e.g., the police) in their communities.

In a similar fashion, Natalie recounted another experience about integrating students of color into a course for accelerated students. At first her description made it sound like she was resisting her role in the situation and transferring responsibility onto the "school system":

> And so I, like, in this classroom, I unfortunately don't have very many African American students, because the program has failed to attract and retain them. Even if they do join, they leave early, and it's awful. It is the

> weirdest thing… when you walk into our school and you go into my classroom and you see mostly White kids and then you walk across the hall and you're like, wha'? Why is this classroom totally different, you know…Black] And it feels weird because if we know that with [this program] we are giving our students more opportunities in life and that's great for some of our students but we've got that really visible gap which is weird and then this [segregation] adds to it, like I see that for our African American students that I think we could be doing better. So it's not necessarily something that is going on in my classroom, for me it's more like a school, like, broader picture. (Transcript 6/19/17)

It soon became clear, however, that she did understand how the systemic nature of racism had impacted programmatic decisions in her school. Further, she witnessed how these racist programmatic decisions negatively impacted the school lives of her African American students:

> Natalie: Although it is true in my classroom too, like it's hard for my Black kids to stay in [the program]. They feel awkward… they feel like I am in the wrong place, the wrong setting. And then the kids who don't like those who do connect with [this] program, and I only have two African American students this year, when they've done that, they end up being part of a different community and they have a much harder time like crossing over and being involved with the Black community as well… So that's kind of

> strange. But I am pushing to create like an African American student group but there just are not that many kids and if they already feel like, oh I really stick out and so when I talk to kids about it they're just a little bit hesitant… like I'm not sure I want to form a group and have this label and be like here I am… when they are doing their best to hide or even drop out of it. So it's a very heavy complicated problem with mixed success. (Transcript 6/19/17)

Here, like Theresa, Natalie is also uncertain about her response to the systemic marginalization of her African American students. She expresses a desire to reach out and create a support group for them but she also realizes that this move might actually serve to marginalize these students further. While Natalie sees how difficult it is for her Black students to navigate the complexities of their academic and social identities within this accelerated program, it is less clear what sort of thoughtful action she might take. This conundrum confirms that even established anti-racist practitioners experience difficulties enacting race-visible identities all of the time.

Helen: Taking the next stand

In some ways, Helen's journey paralleled that of Natalie. Helen enhanced her identity as an anti-racist teacher by making multiple changes to her classroom. These changes in turn ensured a more equitable and successful learning experience for her students of Color. Despite Helen's success in

enacting change in her classroom, she also commented on moments of uncertainty when it came to addressing issues of race and racism. When I asked her about what changes she noticed in her school building, she responded this way:

> Helen: Although, okay, things are not always so rosy… I can pick up on some anger and tension between White students and students of Color. There are times when my Black students will say something and the Whites won't say anything back, like there is this White guilt about it and I don't always know what to do with that. And I know there have been a lot of meetings with parents over on the one side too many suspensions and the other side not enough suspensions, but I haven't been deeply involved in those conversations. (Transcript 6/20/17)

When I asked her if there was a reason why she didn't get involved, she responded by explaining that because she was new to the building she had more pressing concerns to worry about. Besides, she had been told that the building had an Equity Team and it was their job to deal with "those kinds of situations." For Helen, like Kaitlyn and Rachel, deepening her antiracist pedagogy focused first on relationships inside the classroom. And while Helen reported success at creating a positive classroom environment for her students, perhaps she was unaware of the racial tensions that also existed between the students. Helen did

not yet located herself within the systemic issues that existed in her school building.

Conclusion

The reality is that teaching is an imperfect process filled with difficulties and challenges. Throughout this process, there has been for me a tension between the having of good intentions and the fulfillment of those intentions. As White teachers strive to provide better, more equitable and culturally responsive classroom environments for our students of Color, we will continue to hold these tensions.

By engaging in a race-critical action research process, these teacher partners challenged themselves and one another to think more deeply about issues of race and racism in our classrooms. More importantly, we planned and implemented modifications to our curricula, pedagogy, and climate so as to establish deeper levels of cultural relevance in our classrooms. This process was indeed imperfect; at times we neglected to act in ways we knew would be beneficial for our students. However, we remained committed to the journey. In the next chapter I describe how these complexities were present in my role as a teacher researcher as well.

Chapter 5: Researcher Moves

My role in this research study was complex. Part of this analysis is directly tied to my own moves as a White, female, teacher researcher. Further, while I initially put myself forward as a teacher researcher, as my own professional duties changed over the course of the study, the ways in which I performed the duties of a teacher researcher also shifted. In this chapter I re-visit the dual roles I held as both insider and outsider. I then analyze the moves I made and critique the ways in which I also enacted both race-visible and race-evasive identities.

Teacher Researcher Positionality and Reflexivity

In chapter three I described the significance of researcher positionality in a race-critical action research study. In this case study, I positioned myself as a teacher researcher, meaning I enacted a dual role as both a classroom practitioner and also as a university scholar. I made this decision because I believe that this type of position can serve as an advantageous conduit for p-12 educators as well as teacher educators within the academy. By harnessing insider as well as outsider knowledge, I encouraged the exchange of practitioner knowledge and theory. What follows in an analysis of that exchange.

Insider status.

During the first year of this study I positioned myself in part as a full-time global studies teacher. As such, I enjoyed insider status within the GST-LED group. I could easily relate to other teacher partner's anecdotes about students

and their families, the curriculum, and school politics. We understood the rhythms of the school year; how our stress levels grew by the end of each term and the relief we felt during holiday breaks. This camaraderie opened a space during our group sessions where all of us felt brave enough to share our weaknesses as well as our strengths, our hopes and also our fears about the profession we loved. I am thankful to have participated in this way, because I do believe that if my status had been different and I had been viewed only as an outsider, I would not have gained access to this complete range of experiences.

At the same time, when I step back and critique this insider position, I can see that I may not have taken advantage of the opportunity to push back more often on race-evasive practices and call for greater anti-racist action. In reviewing my notes from our group sessions, I did notice that while there were multiple instances when I asked critical questions of the other teacher partners, and they asked critical questions of each other, very rarely did the teacher partners ask critical questions of me. It may well be that the teacher partners consciously or unconsciously saw me as an outsider or even as an authority figure and did not see me as just another teacher. By the start of our second year, moreover, my responsibilities in my school building changed and I stopped teaching all together. I do not think this had much of an impact on my relationships with the teacher partners as by this time our group sessions had ended and I was in effect coaching them individually on their action plans.

Outsider status.

Although I know I emphasized my role in the classroom with the other teacher partners, I also tried to be very transparent about my role as a university researcher. One of the strengths of this role was my ability to select quality critical texts for us to investigate. In adopting Milner's (2006) piece about the having of good intentions, I incorporated that phrase into the unofficial mission of our GST-LED group: that as anti-racist teachers it was incumbent upon us to move beyond the having of good intentions; we were required to act.

I chose the texts for our course of study because they linked theory with action. Specifically, the texts illustrated race-critical theories by emphasizing two important anti-racist actions: eliminating deficit thinking paradigms and restructuring power dynamics in classrooms. To help the teacher partners move from theory to action it was necessary to engage them in a process of critical reflection. Therefore, in our group sessions I developed a variety of tasks meant to illicit the teacher partner's interpretations of issues of race and racism on personal, professional, and systemic levels. These activities often took the form of written journal reflections, which were then discussed.

Perhaps most importantly, I did use my role as an outsider to insist on moving our work forward in the form of an action plan. Quite honestly, if I had

been teaching full time during the second year of the study, I do not think I could have dedicated as much time as I did to communicating with the teacher partners about their action plans. I was also able to locate and provide additional resources. This gift of time was truly invaluable as not only did it allow me to assist the teacher partners, in having space to think and reflect, I was able to critique the moves I made as a teacher and as a researcher. Unsurprisingly, yet still disappointingly, I found that despite years of working with issues of racism and identity, I continue to enact both race-visible and race-evasive teaching practices.

Race-Visible Researcher Moves

Several of the moves I made as a teacher researcher in this study could be categorized as race-visible, anti-racist, or equity-oriented. In my efforts to adopt an antiracist or equity oriented stance, I established a collaborative space for the teacher partners to engage in critical reflection of the ways in which race and racism impact the teaching and learning in our classrooms. I asked the teacher partners to examine their own racial identities and also to interpret how they think they enacted those identities in the classroom. It was important to me that race and not other factors remain the focus of our work together.

I also brought forth meaningful critical texts based on race-critical theories in order to push the teacher partners into deeper levels of reflection and conversation. These texts kept our focus on the schooling experiences of

students of Color, particularly African American students. The work of Taylor (2008) and Ferguson (2008) were especially useful as they provided practical changes the teacher partners could make in order to deepen their anti-racist practices.

Perhaps most importantly, I insisted that those conversations based on the critical texts lead to action and significant change in our classrooms. Although previous scholarship eliciting White teachers' interpretations of their experiences with race and racism has been instrumental in molding the latest race-critical work, I stand strongly with scholars who insist that critical reflection is not enough to dismantle inequitable educational barriers for students of Color, there must be a corresponding emphasis on critical action.

Race-Evasive Researcher Moves

Looking over the scope of this study, I can now identify times when I remained race-evasive or I enabled others to be race-evasive. Preliminary drafts of my analysis focused almost exclusively on positive or race-visible moves the teachers made. This is partly due to my tendency to begin with a generous read of each situation, however, if that is always my first reaction, I will continue to miss opportunities to provide critiques when they are necessary.

In addition, it is clear several of the teacher partners struggled to address the institutional nature of race and racism in their pedagogical moves. This suggests that I did not structure our course of study with enough emphasis on the

history of race and racism to ensure those deeper levels of analysis. Or maybe I needed to ask more pointed questions. Perhaps I was too worried about my relationships or status within the group. Or perhaps my desire to put "teacher friendly" critical texts in their hands also did not afford us enough opportunity to interrogate the systemic nature of racism in schools.

Perhaps the most disappointing race-evasive move I made was to neglect and ignore the necessity to engage students and communities of Color in this work. This was a symptom that plagued nearly all of the teacher partners. In fact, only Natalie actively engaged her students and their counterstories in the classroom. The rest of us reified our positions as privileged White gatekeepers by not seeking knowledge, indigenous knowledge, from the communities of our students of Color. This result unfortunately confirmed Brewer's (2014, p. 167) conclusions about university-led research within historically marginalized communities. Despite an awareness of the educational barriers faced by students of Color, by not designing and implementing research processes that demanded the inclusion of communities of Color, I continued to embody the elitist and exclusionary practices I had hoped to change.

Conclusion

My analysis illustrates that researcher identity, like teacher identity, is complex and discursive. I appreciate recent race-critical scholarship such as second-wave critical Whiteness studies for their appeal to encourage "complex

understandings of race-evasive *and* race-visible White identities, that recognize the problematics *and* potentials of race-visible representations, and that anticipate the intricate missteps and advancements that accompany teaching and learning about race, whiteness, and White identity" (emphasis original, Jupp et al., 2016, p. 1177). As one professor told me, this is really difficult work. The important thing is to surround yourself with good people and keep moving forward (T. Lensmire, personal communication, December, 2009). In the next and final chapter I will describe my recommendations for moving this difficult work forward.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

As a practicing White female classroom professional, I have too often witnessed the effects of institutional racism on students of Color. As a graduate scholar in the field of social studies education, I have too often witnessed a disregard for these issues. The impetus behind this study was my desire to address these educational inequities by integrating three research interests, teacher collaborative inquiry, the theory-practice gap, and antiracist education, into a research study that would support White female teachers as we enacted greater forms of culturally responsive and antiracist teacher practice.

To begin my study I reviewed the literature that would help me chronicle previous scholarship and support the need for my study. Specifically, I positioned my work within a framework of sociocultural and race-critical theories that supported my conviction that race-critical teacher collaborative inquiry most effectively advances antiracist action on the part of classroom teachers. In addition, as an antiracist teacher educator, it was essential to ground my work within theories enacted by scholars of Color, such as critical race theory. I used CRT to ensure that I would keep issues of race and racism at the center of my work.

After reviewing the literature I used case methods to conduct a race-critical action research study. I convened a small group of White, female, middle-

level social studies educators to embark on a journey of critical reflection and anti-racist action. In this chapter I detailed the decisions I made about my own positionality as a teacher researcher. I also detailed the data I collected alongside the processes I used to analyze that data.

After conducting my analysis, I reached several conclusions. Beginning with a generous read of the data, I found that the teacher partners attempted and in some cases succeeded in appropriating culturally relevant tools that helped them deepen their antiracist practice. Specifically, Kaitlyn and Rachel redesigned a unit on Africa to include a focus on the agency of African communities within global food insecurity issues. Theresa and Natalie restructured their classrooms to open up spaces for student voice, and Helen built a caring classroom community that insisted on high expectations for students, while providing the academic and social support needed to ensure student success.

However, I also found that the teacher partners often resisted the tools offered to them and this resistance prevented them from enacting greater levels of antiracist teacher practice. In multiple instances, the teacher partners maintained race-evasive identities by denying or ignoring the counternarratives of their students and by failing to identify the systemic nature of racism in classrooms.

In terms of my own positionality within this study, I found that I similarly made both race-visible and race-evasive moves as I negotiated my identity as a

White teacher researcher. I proactively developed my own antiracist practice when I established a collaborative space for the teacher partners to engage in critical reflection of the ways in which race and racism impact the teaching and learning in our classrooms. I also brought forth meaningful critical texts based on race-critical theories in order to push the teacher partners into deeper levels of reflection and conversation. Further, I insisted that those critical conversations lead to action and significant change in our teaching practice.

At the same time, I resisted opportunities to deepen my own antiracist teacher practice and appropriated race-evasive stances. For example, I was initially too generous and not critical enough of the moves of the teacher partners. In addition I did not provide enough opportunity for the teacher partners to investigate racism on systemic levels. Further, I allowed us to reify our positions as privileged White gatekeepers by not seeking indigenous knowledge from the communities of our students of Color. Importantly, my analysis confirms previous race-critical scholarship about the complexity of race work with White teachers.

In this final chapter I will return to the three motivations that undergird this study, teacher collaborative inquiry, the theory-practice gap, and antiracist pedagogy, and speak to the larger implications of this work to the field of education scholarship.

Significance of the Study

This study emanated from my desire to encourage more social studies teachers to change their classroom practice so as to eliminate race-based barriers to success for students of Color. To accomplish this goal, I convened a group of White, female, middle level social studies teacher partners and encouraged dialogue and action through critical self-reflection. Over the course of two years, our group met, explored critical texts, shared significant personal and professional experiences, and ultimately enacted action plans to improve the cultural responsiveness of our classrooms. These experiences were then analyzed for findings that would contribute to the growing body of scholarship on race-critical teacher research. This analysis is significant for several reasons. First, it confirms what previous scholars have concluded about the significance and impact of teacher collaborative inquiry. Second, the case described here provides an important example of how stronger relationships between p-12 classrooms and higher education can reduce the theory-praxis gap and create knowledge that is beneficial to both educational communities. Finally, this study confirms that using sociocultural and race-critical theories provides the necessary structure to sustain the focus of research on issues of race and racism, which in turn leads to the enactment of deeper antiracist teacher practice.

Teacher collaboration and teacher research.

In this section I return to the question of teacher collaboration and teacher research. While the debate over the significance of teacher collaboration

continues, this study supports conclusions from previous scholars (Palinscar, 1998; Shulman, 1986 Zeichner, 1993) that teachers learn more when they learn together. This has implications for future classroom practice and well as the trajectory of future research.

When teachers have the time and space to collaborate on addressing issues of race and racism in their classrooms they are more likely to enact anti-racist teacher practices. This was evident in the structure of the GST-LED group. Through the reading of critical texts, race-reflective journal writing, and discussion, the teacher partners participated in this continuous process of collaborating and learning together. This collaborative process created opportunities for the teacher partners to learn and grow from one another. For example, after Natalie shared about the colormute professional development session on Africa, Rachel shared how her thinking about how portrayals of race in her curriculum had changed:

> Rachel: I wrote about how I didn't think I had ever done that [portrayed stereotypical images of a global culture]. I mean, I try to bring in lots of images, especially, because the kids can really relate to things when they see them, you know? And I was just thinking about how I always start my units that way. And we just started a unit on Asia and then I knew, oh no… well, I did that [portrayed stereotypical images of a global culture]! We watched a video about China that was very culturally orientated. You

know, there were a lot of clips about food and about how the culture originated and what is different about China today and I meant it as an introduction… but there was this one part… Well, the kids were totally focused on this one man's bad teeth and they made a really big deal about it and I just didn't say anything…

Me: How might you have addressed that differently?

Rachel: I don't know. I mean, I probably should have asked them, well, why do you think this guy has such bad teeth? What do you think his life is like? What is his standard of living and access to a dentist?

Theresa: Yeah, but then we're right back at deficit thinking, right? Like the kids will think: people who live in China are so poor that they can't afford to go to the dentist? (Transcript 3/15/16)

There is a great deal to unpack in this discussion. First, let me clarify that issues of poverty in African countries and issues of poverty in China are not the same in part because the two societies are not connected to colonialism and European domination in the same ways. However, what is important here is the evidence of Rachel's growing awareness that there are structural and systemic forces behind the seemingly personal stories that students encounter in our global studies classrooms.

In addition, this conversation illustrates both the power of teacher collaboration to produce more culturally responsive ways of thinking while

simultaneously showing the complexity of that work. In this case Natalie's analysis of her experience assisted Rachel's appropriation of a deeper sense of the systemic nature of concepts such as race and class. What Rachel originally saw as a harmless introductory video she now understood to be problematic; not only did it reinforce stereotypes of people from Asia, it also provided no context from which students could understand the complexities of the lives of people from global cultures. In addition, Theresa was able to identify potential student reactions that, while difficult to address, could also lead to greater explorations of race and class and the relationship between individual agency and institutional power in any given society. By participating in teacher collaborative inquiry the teacher partners benefitted from the shared knowledge of the group.

Implications for future classroom practice.

The conclusions from this study reveal how important it is for schools to provide time, space, and direction for teacher collaboration. Besides the collaborative nature of the GST-LED group itself, many of the teacher partners benefitted from collaborative relationships within their own school buildings. For example, Kaitlyn and Rachel were able to plan and implement their unit of Africa together. As a result, they did enact significant changes to the content of their course. In addition, although Helen did not have a social studies teacher to partner with, by collaborating with her grade level team they also succeeded in providing a more culturally relevant and responsive learning environment for their

students. It is interesting to note that the one teacher partner pair who did not participate in school-level collaboration, Natalie and Theresa, also experienced the most disparate results: Natalie significantly deepened her anti-racist teacher practice while Theresa did not.

Implications for future research.

The experiences of the GST-LED group can influence the direction of future research in the area of teacher collaboration. While this study confirmed the value of encouraging teachers to work together on issues of race and racism, these recollections also proffer significant questions about research on teacher collaboration. For example, future research could explore questions about how much time and support is needed to ensure that teachers enact deeper levels of antiracist teacher practice. Given the dearth of scholarship investigating race-critical teacher collaborative action research, I hope this study illustrated the value of engaging in research studies that use processes such as race-reflective journaling and the interrogation of critical texts.

Theory-practice gap.

This study promotes the belief, supported by previous scholarship (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999, 2009) that teacher collaboration and the subsequent knowledge such collaboration produces are instrumental in bringing about substantive change for students of Color in White classrooms. The previous chapters have illustrated some of ways the teacher partners did

successfully collaborate and institute meaningful changes to their practice. These results also have implications for future classroom practice and future research in this area.

Implications for future classroom practice.

This study reveals several implications for teacher collaboration and the theory-practice gap. Kaitlyn and Rachel's new unit on Africa convinced them that developing authentic assessments would help them eliminate their students' deficit thinking about indigenous cultures around the world. Natalie's new discussion protocols helped her see the importance of providing space for her students of Color to critique the systems of oppression they experienced at school and in their communities. And Helen worked to dismantle negative discourses of differentiation in her classroom. What this says to me is that classroom teachers have to be supported to first learn about how racism works on systemic levels in classrooms and schools. This must be followed by an examination of their role in maintaining or resisting these systems. Teachers must then commit to and succeed in changing their practices. Further, even though not all of the teacher partners felt successful, or did succeed in maintaining the changes to their classrooms, they all learned something about themselves and the difficulty of becoming a more antiracist teacher.

Implications for future research.

The teacher partners in this study embody Pollock's (2008) conception of antiracist teaching as a "struggle to change a system that is unequal, while working within it" (p. 348). At the same time, although the teachers embraced these concepts of equity and social justice, their practice did not always match that rhetoric. There exists a need to promote deeper levels of analysis in order to enact more conscientious forms of antiracist work and resist the paralysis known as the "having of good intentions." The results of this study show that teachers need to be pushed to engage in inquiry processes such as this one.

I argue that stronger relationships between public schools and universities could provide the structure needed to develop and maintain anti-racist classroom practice. Teacher educators and scholars must design these sorts of research studies and also maximize the potential of pre-service teaching candidates in this endeavor. More importantly, unlike this study that unfortunately lost itself in some ways in Whiteness, future research of this nature must include scholars of Color. As Brewer (2014) reminds us,

> The history of universities exploiting historically marginalized communities through both research on these communities and by expansion into these communities must be critically challenged and changed through a radical model of engagement and change. This transformation must be led by the communities most impacted by injustice. (p.167)

It is significant that one of the most common race-evasive moves I and the

teacher partners made was to restrict our collaboration and planning with one another and not with our students, particularly our students of Color. If, however, a university led study employed a greater anti-racist lens, the influence of this type of unconscious bias could be eliminated and a truer version of critical participatory action research could produce the kinds of changes that would eliminate barriers to education opportunity for all students.

Antiracist action.

A third crucial tenet that undergirded this study was a belief in antiracist action. More specifically, that teacher collaboration based on critical reflection and action would produce greater understandings of antiracist teacher practice which in turn would lead to substantive enactment of culturally responsive pedagogy which would result in improved academic and social outcomes specifically for Black, Latinx, American Indian and other immigrant populations in US schools.

Implications for future classroom practice.

What my analysis shows is that the teacher partners were constantly appropriating *something.* At specific moments in time, the teacher partners appropriated antiracist practices such as defying deficit thinking paradigms and restructuring power in the classroom. This process was assisted through collaborative inquiry based on race-critical action research. However, at other moments in time, the teacher partners resisted opportunities to enact an

antiracist stance and evaded or ignored issues of race and racism in their classrooms. What I conclude from the complex and fluid process of teacher identity formation is that teachers also need to be reminded that, "you can't be neutral on a moving train" (Zinn, 2002). A decision made by a teacher to do nothing, to ignore a racially charged situation for example, is still a decision to do something: to allow systemic racism to continue to deny educational opportunities to students of Color.

School systems, if they are serious about equity in education, will design and implement in-service professional development processes to help teachers create and maintain their antiracist teacher practice. Schools should utilize recent scholarship that specifically points to the need for these different forms of professional development, forms that center issues of race and racism and help teachers develop their "racial pedagogical content knowledge" (RPCK) (King and Chandler, 2016, p. 6). One possible form of this type of professional development has been termed *critical professional development (CPD)* by Kohli, Picower, Martinez, & Ortiz (2015). These authors describe CPD in the following way:

> *Critical professional development* follows the tenets of dialogical action: it is designed to provoke cooperative dialogue, build unity, provide shared leadership, and meet the critical needs of teachers. CPD engages teachers in political analysis of their role as educators in the re-production or resistance of inequality (emphasis original, p. 11).

In-service professional development facilitators could use the criteria set forth in this critical professional development framework in order to ensure that anti-racist and equity-oriented approaches are adopted and supported by classroom teachers.

In sum, the case continues to be made that classroom practitioners need spaces where they can push one other to interrogate their own racial selves, critically reflect on issues of race and racism in their personal and professional lives, and make anti-racist changes to their practice in order to provide the best learning environments for all students, particularly for students of Color.

Implications for future research.

The results reported here speak to the need to use race-critical theories to sharpen analysis of teacher development and practice. In chapter two I briefly reviewed two exciting new frameworks recently implemented by race-critical scholars, Chandler and King's (2016) conception of *non-racist* vs. *anti-racist* stances in the classroom, and Martell and Stevens' (2017) formulation of a similar dichotomy known as *tolerance-oriented* vs. *equity-oriented* approaches to race in the social studies classroom. These frameworks should be used to provide greater details about the race-conscious moves teachers make in the classroom and also what precipitates those moves. Moreover, teacher educators should also consider the perspective that second-wave critical Whiteness scholarship (Jupp et al., 2016) provides. Within their conception of *fertile*

paradoxes, White teacher identity is shaped by both race-visible and race-evasive moves. This level of interrogation is needed to more accurately portray and make sense of how teachers negotiate their worlds. This information can further formulate stronger teacher preparation and teacher development programs.

Final Conclusion

This study contributes to and extends research in race-critical studies. The action research process detailed here contends that engaging White teachers in critical race work is complex. The results were not experienced uniformly across teacher partners, or their students. Despite a strong desire to do so, the teacher partners continued to consistently deny deficit forms of thinking about their students of Color. They also struggled with sharing power and authority with their students.

This study adds to the growing body of scholarship that describes the level of complexity within race work for teachers. When teachers collaborate they are more likely (but not always) to enact meaningful change to their practice. This collaboration is an essential piece to narrowing the theory-practice gap. The teacher partners still embodied both race-evasive and race-visible identities, but the new knowledge generated in this study will expand the field. This analysis will assist teacher educators and professional developers as they design race-critical coursework for pre-service and in-service teachers. In addition, this analysis will

encourage teaching professionals to pressure their administrations to provide time and resources so that teachers can work collaboratively to increase antiracist teaching practices and reduce race and racism in classrooms.

When teachers are given the time and space they need to critically and collaboratively examine their practices, and when teachers are supported to enact deeper conceptions of culturally responsive and anti-racist teacher practices, then barriers to educational opportunities for students of Color will be eliminated and their futures will no longer be predetermined. May it be so.

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Appendix A

Race Critical Action Research: 8th Grade Global Studies Teachers Move Beyond the Status Quo to Address Issues of Race and Racism in Our Classrooms
Informed Consent Form

You are invited to be in a research study of that examines how teachers working collaboratively together can create more equitable classrooms. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an 8th grade Global Studies teacher in the Central City Public School System and because you have exhibited a commitment to the following principles:

a) racism continues to be a formidable social problem that our society and schools must address and eradicate;
b) the social studies classroom is a place where teachers and students should examine issues of inequalities in our national and global society;
c) teachers should engage their students in a classroom characterized by open dialogue;
d) teachers need a space to engage in critical examinations of themselves, their students and the classrooms they enact, as both agents of the institution and as agents of change.

We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by: Kate Andrews van Horne, Ph.D. candidate in the department of Curriculum and Instruction.

Background Information
The purpose of this research is twofold. First, to create a space where 8th grade Global Studies teachers can engage in meaningful dialogue about how issues of race and racism impact our classrooms and second, to design and implement action plans to address issues of race and racism in our classrooms.

Procedures:
If you agree to be in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

1. Each participant will participate in two one-hour interviews. Each interview will be digitally recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions will be kept anonymous, but made available to other members in the group for the duration of the study. At the completion of the study these recording and transcripts will be secured for future publication.

2. Each participant will become a member of the Global Studies Teacher Leaders for Equity and Diversity. The GST-LED group will meet once a month for approximately two hours per session. Activities in these sessions will include: race reflective journaling, face-to-face group discussions and also online discussions. All sessions will be audiotaped and transcribed. The transcriptions will be made available to other members in the group for the duration of the study. At the completion of the study these recording and transcripts will be secured for future publication.

3. Each participant will create an Action Plan for his/her classroom. This plan could take many forms as long as it delineates how issues of race and racism will be addressed in the classroom.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study
The study has several risks: The first is a possible loss of privacy; participants are being asked to share both public and private information with me and other group members. The second is a level of discomfort; participants are being asked to answer questions that may be perceived as emotional and/or controversial. The third is a level of inconvenience, although the interviews will be held at a time and location most convenient to each participant, the group sessions will be held at a neutral site.

There are a few benefits to participation: The first is membership in a supportive group of colleagues dedicated to improving our professional practice. The second is access to materials and strategies implicated in improving our professional practice.

Compensation:
You will receive Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) at the rate of one CEU per hour of participation.

Confidentiality:
The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report we might publish, we will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only researchers will have access to the records. Audio recordings and transcripts will also be stored `

Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the University of Minnesota or with the Minneapolis Public School District. If you decide to participate, you are

free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

Contacts and Questions:
The researchers conducting this study are: Kate Andrews van Horne, Dr. Patricia Avery and Dr. J.B. Mayo Jr. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact either Dr. Avery at: 170 Peik Hall, 612-625-5802, avery001@umn.edu, or Dr. Mayo at: 168 Peik Hall, (612) 625-2534, mayo@umn.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Research Subjects' Advocate Line, D528 Mayo, 420 Delaware St. Southeast, Minneapolis, Minnesota 55455; (612) 625-1650.

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Race Critical Action Research: 8th Grade Global Studies Teachers Move Beyond the Status Quo to Address Issues of Race and Racism in Our Classrooms

Interview Protocols

I. Initial Interview

1. I'm interested in learning about who you are as a teacher: Can you tell me about your job here at "--" school: how long have you taught here, what is your classroom like, etc.?

Follow up: As a teacher, what would you say are your strength areas? What are your goals for the year?

2. I'm also interested in how you address issues of race and racism in your classroom. Can you think of a time when an issue of race/racism became a focal point for your class?

Follow up questions: how often would you say issues of race/racism are raised in your classroom? Do you typically lead this inquiry or do the students? Are there specific topics or activities that lead to this type of inquiry?

3. I'm further interested in the extent to which teachers are aware of the role that Whiteness and White Privilege impact our classrooms and deny an equitable educational experience for our students of color. How do you see Whiteness/White Privilege playing a role in your classroom?

Follow up questions: Have you had any professional development around these issues? If so, how did these experiences influence you?

4. The next thing I would like to talk about is your own racial identity journey. How would you describe yourself in terms of your racial and cultural heritage? How did you come to these understandings?

Follow up questions: How racially diverse were the neighborhoods you grew up in, and the schools you attended? What types of interactions did you have with individuals from racial backgrounds different from your own?

5. The last thing I would like to ask you is about how you think your racial identity journey has influenced you as a teacher. Can you think of something specific that you can connect between the journey you have taken to learn about yourself as White person and how you live that White identity out as a teacher in your classroom?

Follow up questions: In what ways do your racial and cultural backgrounds influence how you experience the world, what you emphasize in your teaching, and how you interpret the experiences of your students? How do you know?

Also, what do you believe about race and culture in society and education, and how do you attend to your own convictions and beliefs about race and culture in your classroom? Why do you do these things? How do you know?

II. Mid-Study Interview (end of year 1)

1. I'm interested in hearing your evaluation of the school year. How did things go, especially for your students of Color?

Follow up question: To what do you attribute these changes?

2. One of the topics we focused on this year was eliminating deficit thinking. Which parts of our inquiry were most important for you and why?

Follow up: How did this new learning impact your classroom?

3. Another topic we focused on this year was re-structuring power in the classroom. Which parts of our inquiry were most important for you and why?

Follow up: How did this new learning impact your classroom?

4. The last thing I'd like to ask you about is your action plan. What specific concerns do you need to address in your curriculum, pedagogy and climate in order to ensure an equitable classroom for all students, but especially for your students of Color?

What do you envision might be possible barriers to enacting this plan?

How can I help you in this process?

III. Concluding Interview (end of year 2)

1. I'm interested in hearing your final assessment of the year. How do you think things went, especially for your students of Color?

   Follow up questions: How do you know how things went for your students of color? What specifically did you do to elicit their ideas and responses?

2. The next thing I'd like to ask you about is your action plan. To what extent were you able to enact the changes addressed in your action plan? What challenges did you face and how did you address them?

   Follow up questions: How have our group sessions led to changes in your thinking and/or practice about deficit thinking and/or power in the classroom?

   What further actions will you take in order to ensure an equitable classroom for all students?

3. I'm also interested in hearing your final assessment of the study. Which experiences had the greatest impact for you?

   Follow up questions: If we continued next year, what would you continue and what would you change?

Appendix C

Race Critical Action Research: 8th Grade Global Studies Teachers Move Beyond the Status Quo to Address Issues of Race and Racism in Our Classrooms

GST-LED Course of Study and Timeline

Dates:	Topic(s):	Selected Texts:
September – October, 2015	• Initial Interviews	N/A
November 17, 2015 GST-LED Session #1	• Establishing Group Norms • AR: Committing to the Work • Conceptions of Race and Racism • Critical Race Theory: The Social Construction of Race and the Permanence of Racism	G. Singleton, *Courageous Conversations abut Race (pp. 157-164)*
February 18, 2016 GST-LED Session #2	• Conceptions of Race, Racism, Whiteness and White Privilege in Education: Defying deficit-thinking paradigms and re-structuring power in classrooms	H. R. Milner, *But Good Intentions are not Enough (2006)*
March 15, 2016 GST-LED Session #3	• Moving Beyond Good Intentions: holding students to high expectations while providing scaffolding and support	R. Ferguson A. Taylor "Helping Students of Color Meet High Standards" by Ronald F. Ferguson (2008) and "Teaching and Transcending Basic Skills" by Amanda Taylor (2008).

May 10, 2016 GST-LED Session #4	• Moving Beyond Good Intentions: disavowing "banking" notions of education and addressing the teacher-student dilemma	S. J. Thorton, *Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper in Social Studies* Freire, P. *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* *Aspiration and Practice: Teacher as Curricular-Instructional Gatekeeper in Social Studies* (Thornton, 1989) and Paolo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000).
June, 2016	• Mid-Study Interviews	N/A
Fall, 2016 Action Plan Support Meeting #1	• Preparing Action Plans	N/A
Late Winter/Early Spring, 2017 Action Plan Support Meeting #2	• Supporting Action Plans	N/A
June, 2017	• Concluding Interviews	N/A